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Peter F. Newell

UC BERKELEY ATHLETICS AND A LIFE IN BASKETBALL: COACHING COLLEGIATE AND OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS; MANAGING, TEACHING, AND CONSULTING IN THE NBA, 1935-1995

With an Introduction by
Bob Knight

Interview conducted in 1994
by Ann Lage

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Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Pete Newell, 1958.

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Introduction by Bob Knight, Indiana University Coach.

Interviewed 1994 by Ann Lage for the University History Series.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY SERIES LIST

PREFACE

When President Robert Gordon Sproul proposed that the Regents of the University of California establish a Regional Oral History Office, he was eager to have the office document both the University's history and its impact on the state. The Regents established the office in 1954, "to tape record the memoirs of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West," thus embracing President Sproul's vision and expanding its scope.

Administratively, the new program at Berkeley was placed within the library, but the budget line was direct to the Office of the President. An Academic Senate committee served as executive. In the four decades that have followed, the program has grown in scope and personnel, and the office has taken its place as a division of The Bancroft Library, the University's manuscript and rare books library. The essential purpose of the Regional Oral History Office, however, remains the same: to document the movers and shakers of California and the West, and to give special attention to those who have strong and continuing links to the University of California.

The Regional Oral History Office at Berkeley is the oldest oral history program within the University system, and the University History Series is the Regional Oral History Office's longest established and most diverse series of memoirs. This series documents the institutional history of the University, through memoirs with leading professors and administrators. At the same time, by tracing the contributions of graduates, faculty members, officers, and staff to a broad array of economic, social, and political institutions, it provides a record of the impact of the University on the wider community of state and nation.

The oral history approach captures the flavor of incidents, events, and personalities and provides details that formal records cannot reach. For faculty, staff, and alumni, these memoirs serve as reminders of the work of predecessors and foster a sense of responsibility toward those who will join the University in years to come. Thus, they bind together University participants from many of eras and specialties, reminding them of interests in common. For those who are interviewed, the memoirs present a chance to express perceptions about the University, its role and lasting influences, and to offer their own legacy of memories to the University itself.

The University History Series over the years has enjoyed financial support from a variety of sources. These include alumni groups and individuals, campus departments, administrative units, and special groups as well as grants and private gifts. For instance, the Women's Faculty Club supported a series on the club and its members in order to preserve insights into the role of women on campus. The Alumni Association supported a number of interviews, including those with Ida Sproul, wife of the President, and athletic coaches Clint Evans and Brutus Hamilton.

Their own academic units, often supplemented with contributions from colleagues, have contributed for memoirs with Dean Ewald T. Grether, Business Administration; Professor Garff Wilson, Public Ceremonies; Deans Morrough P. O'Brien and John Whinnery, Engineering; and Dean Milton Stern, UC Extension. The Office of the Berkeley Chancellor has supported oral history memoirs with Chancellors Edward W. Strong and Albert H. Bowker.

To illustrate the University/community connection, many memoirs of important University figures have in turn inspired, enriched, or grown out of broader series documenting a variety of significant California issues. For example, the Water Resources Center-sponsored interviews of Professors Percy H. McGaughey, Sidney T. Harding, and Wilfred Langelier have led to an ongoing series of oral histories on California water issues. The California Wine Industry Series originated with an interview of University enologist William V. Cruess and now has grown to a fifty-nine-interview series of California's premier winemakers. California Democratic Committeewoman Elinor Heller was interviewed in a series on California Women Political Leaders, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; her oral history was expanded to include an extensive discussion of her years as a Regent of the University through interviews funded by her family's gift to The Bancroft Library.

To further the documentation of the University's impact on state and nation, Berkeley's Class of 1931, as their class gift on the occasion of their fiftieth anniversary, endowed an oral history series titled "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders." The series reflects President Sproul's vision by recording the contributions of the University's alumni, faculty members and administrators. The first oral history focused on President Sproul himself. Interviews with thirty-four key individuals dealt with his career from student years in the early 1900s through his term as the University's eleventh President, from 1930-1958.

Gifts such as these allow the Regional Oral History Office to continue to document the life of the University and its link with its community. Through these oral history interviews, the University keeps its own history alive, along with the flavor of irreplaceable personal memories, experiences, and perceptions. A full list of completed memoirs and those in process in the series is included following the index of this volume.

September 1994
Regional Oral History Office
University of California
Berkeley, California

Harriet Nathan, Series Director
University History Series

Willa K. Baum, Division Head
Regional Oral History Office

INTRODUCTION by Bob Knight

Seventy Years of Basketball History

The first thing I think about at this point in Pete's career is that he has had a longer active involvement with the teaching of the game of basketball than anyone in basketball history. Pete, Henry Iba, Clair Bee, and Everett Dean are probably the foremost teachers of fundamentals in the entire history of the game of basketball. Pete's involvement with the teaching of the game has lasted far longer in an active way than any of these other three great coaches. Bee, Dean, and Iba continued working with coaches and answering questions and discussing various aspects of the game with them until each was well into his eighties. Pete, however, is going into his eighty-third or eighty-fourth year still very actively involved in the teaching of fundamentals through his Big Man Camps in the summer.

Just for a moment, stop to imagine the incredible developments that have taken place in the game of basketball since Pete Newell first started playing it almost seventy years ago. The ball itself has gone from a lopsided, almost egg-shaped sphere with a heavy string or rawhide lacing to a completely round, laceless, sealed seamed basketball that would be comparable to a cut and polished diamond to the players who played during Pete's first involvement with the game.

Let's just take a moment to discuss the changes that have taken place in defensive and offensive basketball during Pete's time in the game. In the early stages of basketball, defense was entirely a one-on-one, man-to-man concept played essentially the same way by all teams. Pete has witnessed the development of a wide variety of zone defenses. Added to this are the many variations of different zones that involved the match-up principles or the combination of both zone and man-to-man principles.

The zone was probably popularized by Clair Bee more than anyone else. Defensive help was not much of a priority in defensive play in the first thirty years of this century, as the defense was almost entirely focused on the individual playing his own man. The leaders and the development of helping defense, as it pertains to man-

to-man play, were Pete's own coach at Loyola, Jimmy Needles; Henry Iba; and Pete himself.

Next there are the many presses that are used in the game, beginning with half-court trapping, going all the way to the full-court extension of highly pressurized defensive pick-up with trapping or doubling up on the basketball at every opportunity. The many presses that we have in existence today vary in terms of the amount of pressure applied, as well as the point of pick-up, requiring preparation of an extensive kind to be used by any team playing against a team utilizing a variety of pressing defenses.

Through over sixty-five years in the game of basketball, Pete has adjusted to all of the changes that the game has seen on the defensive end of the floor and can very thoroughly describe the ways in which every defensive thought can be implemented, as well as how all of these different approaches to defense can be attacked by the offense. There was a great evolvement in man-to-man defense, as well as the additional defenses that have been added to the game's arsenal of defensive tactics. Such things as trapping, help-side defense, full-court man-to-man pick-up, double teaming the post man, and fighting the passing lanes are all innovations that Pete has seen come about with man-to-man defense.

The first third of this century saw offensive basketball center around three things: the two-handed set shot from the perimeter, the drive or the cut to the basket, and the use of pivot play around the basket with the six-foot lane. Increasing the speed at which the game was played offensively, or the development of the fast break, was perhaps the first really big innovation to come along in offensive basketball. This was then followed by the development of the jump shot, which is probably the greatest single change that any sport that we play in this country has seen.

At the same time as the jump shot was being developed, players became much more skilled in the handling of the basketball both from the dribbling and passing standpoints. I believe that in the last ten years nothing has been a greater change in the game than the ability of players to handle the ball on the dribble in full-court and half-court play setting up teammates for baskets around the bucket or punching the ball back outside for the many three-point shooters that we have in today's game.

There have been a lot of significant rule changes that Pete has witnessed. The elimination of the center jump, the ten-second violation, the widening of the free-throw lane, the three-point shot, and the shot clock, along with the myriad of different points of emphasis from an officiating standpoint. Through all of these innovations, changes, and additions, either to the game itself or the rules of the game, there is one person who has been constant with his involvement in the game, and that is Pete Newell. As new things develop either on offense or defense, or as rules were changed or new rules made, Pete kept absolutely abreast with every change that the game has seen in terms of his ability to teach the game to players and coaches alike.

Pete's Understanding of the Game

Most of the outstanding coaches that I have known have had particular strengths. It may be something on the defensive end of the floor or on the offensive end, and perhaps on occasion, a coach might have strengths at both ends. However, Pete is the only coach that I know who is strong in every point of the game. There isn't any aspect of it, from balance and footwork to attacking the most intricate of defenses, that Pete can't discuss with coaches and teach players.

When I was a young coach at West Point, I used to marvel at watching Clair Bee at camp and how quickly he could have the entire picture of a game that was unfolding before him. Pete is just like that: he sees the game very quickly. But he not only sees the game; he sees things that every other coach might not even consider, and sees these things as important parts of both team and individual development.

Stu Inman first introduced me to Pete at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco in December of 1969, where I was involved with my army team in playing in the Cable Car Classic. Getting to know Pete was the most singularly important thing that happened to me in my own coaching career, because he was always someone that I was able to question and talk to and discuss any aspect of the game of basketball. It has been my great good fortune to have been close to the great coaches I have mentioned, Clair Bee, Everett Dean, Henry Iba. I would add Red Auerbach to that list, because I think he is the greatest psychologist and motivator the game of basketball has ever seen. Red brought to basketball those same qualities that Lombardi gave to football.

Yet, of all the great coaches, no one has, in my opinion, been able to so clearly define all of the different aspects of the game of basketball, both offensively and defensively, as Pete Newell has. His thoughts and ideas have been a very integral part of my own teaching and coaching offensively and defensively, as well as individually and from the standpoint of team play.

Pete's Special Contributions to Basketball

No one in the entire history of the game has given more of himself to basketball than Pete has. I have always felt that this is the true mark of a great coach, not how many games or championships he has won, but how much of himself he has returned to the game. Pete is to this very day actively involved in conducting clinics with coaches in cities all over the world, as well as innumerable coaches here in our own country. There has never been a person who has called, written, or approached Pete with a question about the game of basketball who has not gotten a full and complete answer from him.

Throughout his coaching career, Pete worked at the development of four concepts on defense. He wanted pressure on the basketball at the point of pick-up which would vary from full court to sometimes less than half court. The second thing he always wanted was pressure on the passing lanes, making it as difficult as possible for the ball to be moved from one spot to another. His third emphasis was placed in help-side defense, making sure that players knew where the ball was and were able to attack the basketball and serve as safety valves when they were playing away from the ball. His defense was very much a ball-oriented kind of defense that was a great difference from the traditional man-oriented defenses that were played through the first half of this century.

At the offensive end of the floor, Pete's teams were some of the very first teams that were taught to read the defense. There were always options to cuts, and the options depended on the cutter being able to read what the defensive man was doing and the screener would have to read the defense as well in order to set the screen at the proper angle. This reading of the defense by the individual offensive player is the very basis and foundation on which the popular passing game or motion approach to offense is based today.

One needs only spend a half hour watching Pete work with a player in any kind of a situation, from his Big Man Camp to a kid on a playground, to see the tremendous grasp of fundamental body movement and play that Pete incorporates into his teaching. He is the absolute master of fundamental basketball teaching. Pete's approach to teaching the game has always been one of high demands, accepting nothing other than each player's best effort. His is a no-nonsense approach that put his own teams and players into a better form of physical condition than his opponents were ever able to develop. Today, Pete's Big Man Camps have been recognized all over the world as the very best basketball development camps available anywhere.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that a coach's greatness is determined not by the games or championships he has won but what he has given of himself to basketball. The great coaches who were truly involved with the development of the game of basketball, such as Henry Iba, Clair Bee, Joe Lapchick, Everett Dean, Nat Holman, and Red Auerbach, gave far more to the game than they ever received from it.

Again, most coaches have strengths in particular areas of the game, either at the defensive or the offensive end. In the same vein, most coaches also are stronger in the teaching of play at one position than another. This is again where Pete is in a category by himself in his understanding of what is necessary to play both ends of the floor at all positions of the court, either on the perimeter or the inside. While never a particular advocate of the fast break as a coach, again I found that Pete's knowledge of what it takes to successfully run the break, as well as how to go about defending against it, is just as extensive as his knowledge in any other area of the game.

I don't think anyone has studied the history of basketball any more than I have, and I put Pete Newell at the very top of this list of people who have contributed to the game of basketball. For twenty-eight years Pete Newell has been my teacher and my friend. I have never met a man whom I admire or respect more than him. Put quite simply, Pete is just the best there ever was.

Bob Knight
Basketball Coach, Indiana University

April 1997
Bloomington, Indiana

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Pete Newell

In the world of basketball, both collegiate and professional, Pete Newell is a well-known and highly admired sportsman. And in the world of the University of California, Berkeley, he is a revered member of the Cal family. He came to Cal as coach in 1954, took his team from the Pacific Coast Conference cellar in 1955 to the NCAA championship in 1959, and then retired from coaching in 1960 to serve as Cal's athletic director for eight years. He is remembered for far more than a winning team and innovative defensive and offensive strategies, however. Former colleagues on the faculty and in the athletic department, former team members, and Cal alumni everywhere recall Pete Newell's inspirational qualities: integrity, concern for players as people and students, the ability to foster a sense of team loyalty, a keen understanding of the game, and a willingness to mentor players and other coaches.

Pete Newell has been a student of basketball since his player days at Loyola University in the 1930s under Coach Jimmy Needles. He has been a successful teacher of the game from his first job coaching seventh graders at St. John's Military Academy in Los Angeles to his present role as consultant to the Cleveland Cavaliers and teacher of leading NBA "big men" at his annual Big Man Camp. In the intervening years, he led the University of San Francisco to a national championship, reinvigorated the Michigan State University program, and coached the legendary six years at Cal. In 1960, he was coach of the championship U.S. Olympic basketball team.

After his stint as athletic director for Berkeley, 1960-1968, Pete entered pro basketball as general manager for the San Diego Rockets and then for the Los Angeles Lakers, where he honed his skills at evaluating players and making creative trades and draft choices. Semi-retired since 1976, he has been a consultant for the Golden State Warriors and the Cleveland Cavaliers and has led clinics for basketball players and coaches worldwide. His Pete Newell Big Man Camp attracts major NBA players, who willingly submit to his disciplined approach to basketball basics. His contributions to basketball in Japan earned him Emperor Hirohito's Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1987.

When the Regional Oral History Office was approached by Jonathan Smith in 1993 with the suggestion that we conduct an oral history with Pete Newell, we

welcomed the opportunity to add to our documentation of University of California history and to expand our coverage of athletics on campus. Given the unquestionable influence of sport on American society, we felt it was important not only to discuss the Cal experience, but to record a full memoir of the life and career of this remarkable man. Jon Smith agreed to help raise funds for the project, Pete Newell agreed to undertake the sometimes arduous task of recording an extensive oral history, and the project was launched in early 1994.

I was delighted to receive the assignment as Pete's interviewer. A Cal alumna and longtime basketball season ticket holder, I had in my freshman year watched Pete Newell's final year of coaching at Cal and observed his innovative use of the Towel and the frenzied Harmon Gym atmosphere in the year following the NCAA championship. I knew that my interest in Cal sports and my experience interviewing Berkeley faculty and administrators from fields as diverse as engineering, botany, microbiology, and history would give me the general background needed to provide the framework for Pete's memoir. And there was no shortage of armchair coaches among my basketball seatmates to fill me in on the X's and O's of the game.

After initial research and background interviews with former Chancellor Glenn Seaborg and Cal team alumni Ned Averbuck, I met with Pete Newell in his Palos Verdes, California, home for a blockbuster two-day recording session February 23-24, 1994. We met again April 5 and May 18, again for all-day sessions. Our final session was June 11, 1994, at Quail Lodge in Carmel Valley, where the Cal 1959 championship team was holding its thirty-five year reunion.

The hours spent recording Pete Newell's recollections and reflections were revealing. It soon became apparent that when Pete is not making one of his frequent out-of-town basketball trips, his constantly ringing phone keeps him connected to that world from his southern California home. While we were interviewing, Pete fielded calls from a wide circle of friends and acquaintances: high school and community college coaches phoning for advice and support; a local woman basketball player, with whom he arranged to work early mornings at a local gym; contacts in Japanese basketball circles; an NBA players' agent; a former Cal coach; and newsmen from Charlottesville to San Francisco. For each supplicant, he dispensed sincere concern, humor, warmth, and good advice, reminding me of a friendly and perspicacious Irish priest with parables drawn from basketball instead of the Bible.

He was cooperative and patient with my attempt to get a full picture of his formative influences and his long career. We began with stories of his family and childhood in Los Angeles, his Catholic upbringing and a brief career as a child actor in Hollywood in the early 1920s. He told of his first basketball mentor, Coach Jimmy Needles, the wild games on the Santa Monica pier and the lasting influence of Needles' basketball mind. He vividly described highlights of memorable games and team members from his three collegiate programs, reflected on the ethics of the game and the lessons of basketball for life, and discussed in detail some of the achievements and controversies of his term as athletic director at Cal during a time of student unrest and racial tensions. His recollections from his association with four NBA teams gave insight into the world of professional basketball and owner-manager-coach-player relationships.

After the interview tapes were transcribed, the process of turning taped conversation to a clear and coherent written text began. Pete went over the transcript to clarify passages when necessary, to complete thoughts interrupted by phone calls, add words when meaning had been conveyed by gesture, and to make his great spoken stories communicate on the page. Aside from these changes for clarity and continuity, the text follows the tape-recorded account; tapes are available for listening in the Bancroft Library. For their help in the tape-to-type process, we appreciate the work of ROHO staff member Cici Nickerson, who assisted with the editing of the interview transcript, and former University Archivist Jim Kantor, who carefully proofread the final text.

When I met with Pete Newell in Carmel Valley at the Cal team's thirty-fifth reunion, I also had the opportunity to record brief interviews with team members Dick Doughty, Tandy Gillis, and Bob Dalton. Then I was invited to join other team members on the golf course, where I recorded brief interviews with Denny Fitzpatrick, Darrall Imhoff, Ed Donahue, and Bob Wendell as we rode across the greens in a golf cart. The transcripts of the Dalton, Doughty, and Gillis interviews are included as an appendix to this volume, along with a partial transcript of the background interview with Ned Averbuck. The others, and tapes of all the Newell interview sessions, are available in The Bancroft Library as supplementary material to the Pete Newell oral history. The recollections of the team members give vivid examples of Pete Newell's coaching program, his relationship with his team members, and his lifelong impact on his players. Readers particularly interested in the Cal portions of this oral history will also want to consult the University Archives in the Bancroft Library for the Cal Band Oral History

Project, which includes brief interviews with Pete Newell, Joe Kapp, and members of the Cal band who attended the NCAA tournaments in 1959 and 1960.

This oral history project would not have happened without Jonathan Smith, who is neither a basketball player nor a Cal alumnus, but who is a member of a devoted-to-Cal family who came to know and admire Pete Newell during summertime visits to the Lair of the Golden Bear, Cal's summer family camp. He urged us to undertake the project and then organized the fund-raising effort and followed through during the four-year course of the project. We extend our sincere appreciation to him, to team members who gave ancillary interviews, and to Ned Averbuck, who not only gave an invaluable background interview but was a source of support and encouragement throughout. Thanks are also in order to all the donors to the Pete Newell Oral History Project, whose names are listed on the acknowledgments page; they represent his wide circle of friends in professional and collegiate basketball, as well as among Cal alumni. A special thanks is due Bobby Knight, Indiana University coach and longtime friend of Pete Newell, who wrote the introduction to this volume and also contributed to the funding effort.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. One of its major subject areas has been the history of the University of California; a listing of oral history interviews in this series follows the index to this volume. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

February 1997

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name PETER FRANCIS NEWELL

Date of birth 8/31/15 Birthplace VANCOUVER B.C.

Father's full name PETER F NEWELL

Occupation Worked for Knights of Columbus Birthplace

Mother's full name ALICE HEFFRON

Occupation Housewife mainly Birthplace

Your spouse (Deceased) Florence Jean O'Connor

Occupation Housewife Birthplace

Your children Peter F, Thomas D, Roger K, Gregory D

Where did you grow up? Los Angeles, Ca

Present community Palos Verdes Est, Ca

Education Bachelor of Arts - Loyola Marymount

Occupation(s) Consultant - Basketball (NBA) Cleveland

Areas of expertise Basketball

Other interests or activities Principally Gardening, Basketball Camps + Clinics

Organizations in which you are active Hall of Fame (Basketball) International Basketball (Japan - Italy), NABC (College Coaches Assoc.)

I FAMILY, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION

Father's Social Service for Knights of Columbus

[Interview 1: February 23, 1994]##[1]

Lage: We're going to start by getting some idea of your personal background, with the thought of how your family and youth may have affected your later philosophy and interests. So let's begin with where you were born and something about your parents.

Newell: I was born in Vancouver, Canada, the youngest of eight. I've lost all my brothers and sisters but one sister. But I was the youngest, and I was born in Canada because my father [Peter Newell] worked for the Knights of Columbus. He was transferred from the Middle West, where most all of my brothers and sisters were born, to Vancouver. I was born there in 1915.

Lage: What did he do for the Knights of Columbus?

Newell: Knights of Columbus, I don't know how they are now, but at that time they were very much involved with veterans, veterans of wars, and certainly after the 1918 war when we moved down here [to Los Angeles], he would service all the hospitals and see the Catholic patients that they had, see what their needs were. He'd always bring them little boxes of candies and cigarettes and things like that. There wasn't this ban on cigarettes like there is today. Every time he would visit, he'd always have his car filled with these, and then he'd go around and--

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[1]This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Lage: So it was sort of a social service role?

Newell: It was a social service, and it was also a support system for them, if they wanted a particular priest or they wanted something that he could help provide. Maybe it was legal or something of that nature, where there were lawyers with the Knights of Columbus that would service that need. It was just a personal service to the Catholic patients at these hospitals--and I guess other denominations.

Lage: But focusing on hospitals.

Newell: Yes. Oh, yes. And it was the veterans, really the veterans, of the First World War. He did that, and he worked as a night watchman at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel until his death. I guess he was seventy-four when he died, and I was about--I was the last one, so he was about sixty when I was born, because I was about fourteen, I believe, when he died.

Lage: Your mother must have been younger.

Newell: Yes, my mother [Alice Heffron] was quite a bit younger. She was maybe fifteen years younger. And they both came from the Middle West, my mother from Richmond, Wisconsin, and my father was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, I believe. Somehow they met--I'm not exactly sure how--my older brothers and sisters were more up on that. But they met somewhere; they were both Catholics, and it could have been maybe some kind of a religious get-together.

Johnny Blood, a Cousin and a Football Legend

Lage: What ethnic background were they?

Newell: Irish. County Mayo. Their parents were both born in County Mayo. I guess there were a number of branches of their families, a lot of cousins and whatnot that were in the same area in the Middle West. In fact, there was a family, the McNallys, they were cousins, I guess on my mother's side. But they had one of the most famous football players, who changed his name to Johnny Blood.

There was quite a story about Johnny Blood. He came from a very fine family, and he went to Notre Dame. He was a very, very prominent football player. He and a friend went out and got drunk one night, and they

came home pretty late, and they went up to the altar and one of them said mass--which you don't do--

Lage: When you're drunk?

Newell: Yes, and you don't do it when you're sober either. But they did it, and of course, they got booted out. The story comes back to me that they didn't know what to do, and they didn't want to let their parents know, so they went to Chicago and they decided to go to a movie, and it was Blood and Sand. So he changed his name from Johnny McNally to Johnny Blood and went and played pro football. But because he changed his name, nobody knew that he was no longer at Notre Dame. His friend changed his name to Sand, whatever his first name was I don't know. But they got by with that for a while, because they didn't want to use their own names. The other was a football player too, as the story goes.

But Johnny Blood became a fabled player. He was a real gypsy all of his life. He was kind of the idol of other football players, because he was ahead of his time. He was a free soul.

One time, one of my cousins, who was from there and of course knew Johnny--I just knew him by name; I never really met him--but my cousin knew Johnny growing up. And she had taken a trip to Hawaii. In those days, you went by boat. I think she was a schoolteacher, and she had saved up for this wonderful trip. She met this elderly couple that were very much enchanted with her, and then they were companions during the trip over. Now they get off the gangway, and here sitting on a piling there is this tanned, good-looking guy just sitting there. I think her name was Katie. She comes by with these two very distinguished elderly people, and "Hey, Katie, what are you doing here?" And here is Johnny.

He'd just disappeared, and nobody ever knew where he was. To get over to Hawaii, he'd probably work his way over, and he'd just have a ball until the next football season. I don't know if he ever married, but he was evidently a real good-looking guy and a guy that kind of lived the life that a lot of guys fantasize. But he was a great football player, too.

Lage: What era was he famous in football?

Newell: He was in the era in the late twenties, early thirties. He played for the Green Bay Packers.

Lage: So this was someone you kind of followed as you were growing up?

Newell: I was younger, and I'd hear my older brothers and sisters talking about him, because he became very famous. And even to this day, he's in the Hall of Fame and--he's dead now. He was a legend. He was a legend, is what he was, in his time. But as I say, he lived the kind of a life that most all the other players fantasized, but they were married or they didn't have the free souls to go out and--. He was liable to end up anywhere. I guess he'd get on a ship and he'd work as a deckhand to wherever he wanted to go, and then get off, maybe Samoa, maybe Tahiti, wherever. He was just a free soul.

Lage: Were you a free soul as a kid?

Newell: No. No, I was not.

A Gregarious Mother and Lively Household: Cowboys, Cards, Competition, and Nightly Rosary in the Twenties

Lage: What was it like growing up as the youngest of eight?

Newell: I grew up in a great household.

Lage: Tell me about that.

Newell: My mother was one of those mothers you read about, a stage mother. My sister and I, my sister Cappy and I, we were the two youngest. Catherine was her name, but we called her Cappy. Mother would haul us off to the studios for casting. I was maybe two or three; I guess I was about three. Cappy was a couple of years older; she was maybe five or six. My mother was bound and determined she was going to get us in the movies. You know, you've read about those kinds of mothers. She got us in. She was one of those gals that, you put her in a crowded Macy's basement where they're having sales, and whatever she wanted to get, she ended up in the front row getting it. She was never one of the ones that waited for people to get out of her way. That's the way she was. She would haul us through these crowds of people, one on one hand and one on the other.

She got to know a lot of these people from the movie world. And while I was growing up, we had a big old house in Los Angeles here.

Lage: In what part of Los Angeles?

Newell: Well, first we lived over--and I was real young then--on I think 18th Street near Union, right in there. Then we moved, and I grew up really at 22nd and Raymond, which was then on the west side of L.A. Now it's central. Actually, the Santa Monica freeway now runs right over my house. Raymond is between Normandie and Vermont, and 22nd is almost midway between Adams and Washington. And that was a real nice neighborhood. It wasn't a fancy neighborhood, but it was nice, well-kept houses, and big houses. I grew up there.

Lage: And you moved to Los Angeles when you were very young?

Newell: Yes, just less than a year old.

Lage: So Canada didn't have too much influence on you?

Newell: No. I don't even know how long the family was up there, to be honest with you, but I was the only one born in the West. Maybe Cappy, but the others were all born in the Middle West. And of course, being born in Canada created problems for me when I went into the service. A lot of times, because you were called foreign-born, you had to have birth certificates and your baptismal certificate.

Lage: Even when your parents were American citizens?

Newell: Yes, well, I am an American citizen, because my dad was an American citizen. He never became a Canadian. And neither did my mother. But they weren't there that long, really, then when they came down to L.A.

But anyway, growing up in L.A., there always seemed to be cowboys that were out of work, and we always had an extra room, and you never knew who was going to stay there, I guess is what I'm trying to say about the family home.

Lage: Now, when you say cowboys--?

Newell: Well, when you're in Central Casting, you meet a lot of people that were trying to get jobs. Every now and then, some poor guy that hadn't been able to get a job for a month didn't have a place to eat or sleep, and my mother would invite them home. So you never exactly knew who was going to be there the next morning. My dad, he went along with it. He didn't care. It didn't bother him. But they were characters, and they were really appreciative, too.

One fellow, and I forget what his name was, became a very famous writer. She ran into him, and he hadn't been able to sell anything. He had a

couple of kids. So he brought the kids over, and the kids stayed with us about--I don't know, maybe two months, three months. It was that kind of a house.

Mother loved to have poker games, and she was the worst poker player that ever played, because every time she would get a real good hand, she would sit right up in her seat, and, "All right, whose bet, whose bet?" And everybody knew--she gave it away. Terrible. We tried to tell her. I remember when I was very young, I grew up learning to play poker; when they'd have to go to the bathroom, they'd let me play their hand. I was only seven or eight years old. Bridge, and poker, and pinochle; I could sit in on any game at the age of six or seven.

In fact, while I was back in Michigan State, one of the professors and I won the duplicate bridge contest. They had a duplicate tournament.

Lage: Well, I could see some of the strategy skills in basketball would be similar.

Newell: Yes, the memory and things like that go so much into cards, being able to remember cards, especially in bridge or pinochle.

Lage: So your house was very lively.

Newell: It was very lively.

Lage: Was your mother an attentive mother? Did she keep a close watch on you and your activities?

Newell: Oh, yes. She ran the place. She was much more involved with all the kids even than my dad. My dad was more of a very religious, very passive man. Very bright man from--see, I was really young when he died. I never really got to know him, because he died when I was--I guess maybe between twelve and fourteen, right in there. And so I never really got to know him because he worked, and he--. Every morning, he would make six o'clock mass, no matter what. He was a very devoted man. His sons, my older brothers, really respected him, and whatever he said, went, but he never involved himself a lot. He never was overly strict with anybody.

Lage: Did he require the children to go to mass?

Newell: Oh, yes. And we'd have rosary every night. Many times, my sister would have dates, and they'd have to wait down below and we'd be saying the rosary upstairs in the room. But he never was one to say, you know, "You can't do this, you can't do that." He just felt that if there was enough religious fiber there you'd make right decisions.

Mother would be more inclined to say, "You have her in here by ten o'clock or eleven o'clock," or whatever. If they went out early, why that was all right. But if they were in the house, they were upstairs for rosary at nine o'clock. And nobody ever fought it, so I being the youngest, I went right along with it. I didn't like it a lot. I wanted to do this or that.

Lage: Of course, there was no television to distract you at that time.

Newell: No, only radio. Only radio. But the household was that way, and she loved to have her poker games, and they'd go on until two or three in the morning.

Lage: Did your dad play poker, too?

Newell: No, no. He and my mother were different.

Lage: Different personalities.

Newell: Yes. But there never seemed to be a real problem. My sister-in-law and my oldest brother, they lived with us, too.

Lage: When you were born, how old was the oldest? How much older?

Newell: Well, that's a good question. I'd have to think. Martin was the oldest, and just figure--I would say twenty years. Over twenty. We had eight, but another one would have been a ninth, he died at childbirth.

Trials and Tribulations as a Child Actor in 1920s Hollywood

Lage: Was your mother successful at getting you into the movies?

Newell: Yes.

Lage: How much work did you get?

Newell: More than I wanted; I hated it. I would be in a picture and have to get up at five in the morning and have makeup put on, if I was in a picture, and I'd have to dress and be half asleep and be dragged--have to walk two blocks to the streetcar, and then transfer, and then transfer again. You had to be there before eight o'clock. And hell, I was half asleep all the time. And then it's a hurry and wait. The movies are like the service, it's this hurry and wait situation.

Lage: That's hard on a kid.

Newell: Well, it's awfully hard, and not only that, but everybody's telling you, "Don't do this, don't do that, don't do this," and every now and then somebody's hitting you on the side of the head because you did something--

Lage: [laughs] It doesn't sound too inviting.

Newell: No, it wasn't. I liked to play ball--and not only that, but in those days for the pictures, you had to wear a haircut that was kind of a bob. Now it's a girl's haircut--well, it isn't actually, I see some guys with the haircut now. You see all kinds of cuts now. But I probably had more fights up to six years old than anybody in the history of the world because of that bloody haircut. The kids would call you a sissy and a girl, and you hated the haircut, and you'd always have an answer back. One word would lead to another, and push, and then you got somebody separating you. But it was a constant. I think one of the great joys of my life was the day I got a normal haircut, and that was, I think, at the age of seven.

But yes, I played in a number of pictures. My sister did, too. In fact, Jackie Coogan and I were the final two for a very famous picture called The Kid.

Lage: I think I've heard of that.

Newell: Yes, it's a famous picture with Charlie Chaplin. Jackie Coogan was the first big young star, and that was the picture that made him a star, because he was really good in it.

Lage: So you were a finalist for that role?

Newell: Yes, the two of us. And my mother, I think, out-hustled them, but Jackie was a lot better actor than I was. [laughter] She was selling the director and the producer and all that, and all the time, I'm rooting like hell for Jackie. And he got it, and it became a great picture. [laughing] I remember she was really upset. She was kind of a poor loser. She told somebody, "Well, I think he's a midget." [laughter]

And I remember one of my older brothers told her, "Why do you say that?" "Well, he just has to be a midget to be as good as he is." [laughter]

Lage: Were you free to kind of defy your mother or tell her you didn't like it, or--?

Newell: No, not in a big family, no. When you're the youngest, there's always somebody ready to hit you in the side of the head, so you learn. Not that

you didn't do a lot of things that other kids did. But no, in those days, existence was not easy. And you know, you felt you were doing your part to bring some money into the house. You never saw any of the money, but you didn't expect to.

Lage: Now this was during the twenties, or even earlier, pre-Depression days.

Newell: Yes, but my dad didn't make a lot of money at that job, and he had a lot of kids.

Lage: So it wasn't just stardom your mother was seeking, but it was good income for the family?

Newell: Yes. It was employment. It was money to make the whole thing go. She worked. Later, she worked for Best Foods Mayonnaise, I remember. She worked downtown. I forget what she did, but she was where they have these booths, and you sample the stuff. She worked down at the big market there, and--

Lage: Was this after your father died?

Newell: No, but this was after she got out of the movies. [tape interruption] Anyway, I finally got out of the movie business.

Lage: How did you persuade your mother that it wasn't for you?

Newell: Well, I grew out of it. I got a haircut. Once I got the haircut, I was free. I remember one picture, though; as I say, two times I really screwed up. It was quite a famous picture at the time, and I was a son. I don't know if I drowned my brother or neighbor or something, but that was the plot. But right in the middle of the shooting, we went on vacation. In those days, we would go in those big Packards, and they had the big wheels, you know. When you had a flat tire, you had to take the wheel off, and you had to change the tire.

Anyway, I don't know how old I was, maybe four or five. [laughs] While we were changing the tire, I stepped on the wheel rim and the other side of the rim hit me right in the mouth. And of course, it was my baby teeth, thank God, but it knocked my front teeth out.

Lage: Well, that was not good for your career.

Newell: Well, the pain of that was less than the pain when I got hit by the director, "That dumb kid!". I don't know what they did, how they put two false teeth in there or something.

Lage: So you could continue shooting the movie?

Newell: Yes. So any scene I was in, I didn't have just a gaping mouth. They were able to get through it, but, I tell you, getting hit in the mouth was the easiest part of that whole thing, because everybody was on me for some time.

Lage: They weren't too nice to the kids?

Newell: No, they weren't. And Eric von Stroheim, you probably don't remember him.

Lage: I've heard of him.

Newell: Eric von Stroheim was a very famous German actor who became a very famous director, but he continued acting to the end of his career. He was the butler in the movie Sunset Boulevard with Gloria Swanson and William Holden. He was always the Prussian.

Well, this was just after the First World War when I was four or five maybe. And he played the bad-guy Prussian, because we were fighting Germany. And he was the epitome of the evil Prussian; his looks, although at that time I hadn't run into him, but his looks were this--the Kaiser is going to come over here and kill us all, you know. When you're a kid, that's the kind of feedback you get from your parents and your brothers and your sisters talking, and the conversation always was about the war. So there is an impression that you don't understand, and you don't realize that you're getting, but you are.

So now I'm on this picture with Eric von Stroheim, and he was the meanest man I ever ran into. He was always calling me a dummkopf and pinching me in the cheek and pulling my ear, and it was the first time I ever heard the word "dummkopf." I didn't know what it was. [laughs] I tell you, was I ever glad to get off that picture! One of the things that helped there was my mother; she got involved in the picture too, and she got in a lifeboat. It was down in San Pedro. [laughing] And she screwed up the picture because she was in a lifeboat, and she got seasick! And then she was a dummkopf. And this von Stroheim, he raised hell with both of us.

But I was kind of glad in the sense that she got seasick, because he got off my back for a while. Anyway, she was glad to get out of that picture, too, because her experience wasn't too good in that boat. But that was about the end of my acting career.

Catholic School Experiences

Lage: When you were seven or eight?

Newell: No, I was just getting on to seven or just getting out of six. I was already in school, because I remember I had to always be absent in the first grade--I guess it's first grade--because I was on call on a picture or something like that. Not always, but enough during the year. It was in and out, in and out. I kind of liked school, because the nuns treated me real good, because I was in the pictures. I guess I was kind of a celebrity, which I didn't understand, except it was really nice to be around people that treated you nice.

Lage: [laughs] Not all the nuns did, from the stories I've heard.

Newell: No, that's right. In the fourth grade, I had Sister Columblena. She had a ruler and if you missed catechism, if she asked you a question, and you missed catechism, boy, you had to put out your hand, she'd give you a whack. And [raps table]. In class, I made a statement, just a little--just as kind of an aside thing, I was trying to be smart ass I guess. But this one kid, he was scared to death of her. Jimmy Cline, I can remember his name. Jimmy was scared to death of her, and she knew it. Jimmy would know his lessons, but he'd get so scared he couldn't say them. And every now and then, she'd hit him on side of the head, just like that, you know.

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Newell: She had hit him so many times for about the same things that Jimmy got a pretty good defense--he'd duck and all that. But she was so good that she'd still hit him, as he was ducking. So I said to the kid behind me, "If she played in the American League, she'd hit .480." [laughter]

Lage: And she heard you?

Newell: She heard me, and boy, the next thing I know, I got a lump on my head--bang! [laughter] We finally got out of the fourth grade. I was so happy to get out of the fourth grade, because the fifth grade teacher, her name was Sister Dollerella. She was a doll. She was just the nicest gal, and you could do no wrong in there. It was a great year.

And now another disappointment comes in my life: what do you think happened? The sixth grade teacher is transferred, and they take the fourth grade teacher and put her up to sixth.

Lage: So you had her twice!

Newell: I was going to run away that summer, because I didn't want to go. But when she got to the sixth grade, she was altogether different. We didn't have catechism then, and we didn't have any of those confrontations. She didn't even have her rod anymore.

Lage: Goodness, something happened.

Newell: Yes. I don't know whether she got religion or what. [laughter]

Discipline and Family Responsibility in the Newell Family

Lage: Did any of these experiences with your actors and nuns, or your parents' discipline, influence your ideas of discipline?

Newell: I think so. Yes, I'd say it did, because you had to be certain places at certain times, and you had to do things you didn't really want to do.

Lage: But you didn't like it, either.

Newell: I didn't like it, but it was necessary to do it. Somehow or other, whether it was told to me or whether I just was able to understand it, even though I was young, that I was doing something that helped the family and that was bringing in some money, and my sister the same way, that we were helping bring in money to feed and clothe the family. Because the family unit was a very, very strong thing then. Families seemed to be bigger, and everybody contributed. My oldest sister, she was a stenographer, and she lived at home. She contributed, and the brothers did. I had one brother graduated, my third-oldest brother. He was a Cal graduate, but he had to work his way through Cal. There was never money for--. In fact, he was with the Sigma Chi fraternity and was a house manager. But he worked all the time when he was at Berkeley.

Lage: Did others go on to college?

Newell: No, he's the only one.

Lage: He, and then you were the second--

Newell: Yes. None of my sisters went, either. You see, college is really a privilege. It's not a right. There's a lot of confusion now about we've got to do this, do this, do this. But it's not a right, it's a privilege, a privilege extended to

those that really work hard enough in high school to get the grades to be able to have this great privilege extended.

Lage: Was it anything your mother, or father before he died, encouraged? Did they encourage scholarship?

Newell: Well, my dad went to college. He was very proud that my brother Don went. But my oldest brother, he had to work, and he got married young. And then my second brother, he worked. I'm not sure they even finished high school, my two oldest brothers. My oldest brother worked many, many years for Associated Oil, which was Getty--later Getty took that over. He spent his whole life, practically, with them.

Lage: It wasn't as common to go on to college at that time.

Newell: No, it wasn't. I had no real intention of going to college either.

Lage: In high school, were you a good student, or have an interest in academics?

Newell: No, I got by, but I was always playing sports and--you know, I didn't grow up in money. Which was fine. If somebody said, "Jeez, you were poor," well, I never knew I was poor until somebody told me. And I don't think we were. We always had the big turkey at Thanksgiving, and I always ended up with the neck, and everybody telling me how lucky I was because I got the neck. [laughter] I was fourteen years old before I found out that I was being conned through all these years, because the neck was the last--.

Lage: So that's the way they treated the youngest son.

Newell: Well, that's right. That's the way it was. All that was left when the turkey came to me was the neck.

Difficult Teen Years: Deaths of Father and Brother, Break-up of the Family Home

Lage: You went to Saint Agnes High.

Newell: I went to Saint Agnes Grammar School--

Lage: Oh, grammar school too?

Newell: Yes. One through twelve. And then my dad died when I was in the eighth grade. So I probably--

Lage: Was that hard on you? That seems like a hard time to lose a father.

Newell: Yes, it was, because he was such a symbol of goodness. He was a wonderful man. I just, unfortunately, was not old enough to really appreciate him as my brothers did. He was hard-working, and he never had a cross word for anybody, and he was very tolerant of my mother, who was very outgoing and gregarious.

Lage: That's the wonderful thing, that he was so tolerant of her being so different.

Newell: Well, that's right. And there was an age difference there where he obviously in his seventies was not as active as she was, and she was still in her fifties. She was, as I say, a very active gal, and a doer. She did everything to keep the family going too, in terms of working. Going through the twenties and the thirties there, that's about when I was in junior high. He died right in that period.

Lage: And then did your brothers step in to help support the family?

Newell: Two of my brothers were married now, and they had their own families, but they did help my mother, yes. My oldest brother, sure. And my brother Don, they--. But they weren't able at that time to help that much, because they weren't making much, and they were living away from home now. It was really a difficult period there. After my father died, my brothers, one went up to Cal, and he was away most of the year. He'd spend time up there. So he wasn't around that much.

My second oldest brother had gone in the navy, and he had contracted tuberculosis, so he always had a physical problem because of that. In fact, he was on a pension because of his infirmity.

And then my fourth brother, Walter, went into the navy when he was sixteen. He contracted tuberculosis over in the Philippines, and he died when he was about twenty-two, twenty-three years old in the soldiers' home. In those days, they didn't have the sulfas, and they didn't have the--

Lage: No, they didn't really have a treatment for it.

Newell: No. They didn't have the medicines that we have now. You don't hear of many people dying of tuberculosis now. And it was a shame. I never got to know him that well, although he was the closest to me in age. I was maybe six or seven years old when he enlisted in the navy. And then as I say, he

got on a submarine, and he got tuberculosis over in the Philippines. Evidently down below, it was very sweaty and they didn't have good ventilation. Those days, you seemed like you caught tuberculosis like--I had two brothers catch it. It was more of a common disease than it is now.

Lage: Maybe in the close quarters of the ships and submarines.

Newell: Yes, I think my oldest brother was on a submarine, too. So my fourth brother came home, and that was a sad thing, because he was really a handsome, good-looking guy, and a really nice guy. He was a lot like my dad, a very soft, gentle guy, and to see him just kind of die--he died not too long after my dad. I was about fifteen or sixteen. Just got to know him then. First he was an outpatient at Sawtelle, and finally he was admitted there. And then we had to go visit him, and then just to see him waste away like AIDS patients now, that's the way tuberculosis was.

Lage: It was; I've heard the impact of two epidemics compared.

Newell: Yes. And it was soon after my father died, so it was a sad time. And then one of my sisters, my closest sister, Cappy, got married and her husband was in medical school in Mexico. He had lived right near Saint Agnes School, and they went together while she was in school. Then she got married when she was eighteen, and they lived in Mexico. So she left.

My sister Mary got married about the same time, and then she moved out.

Lage: So your house was getting smaller and smaller.

Newell: Just one brother, myself, and my mother. I'm talking now about when I'm about seventeen, I guess. It was a real sad period for me, because my mother loved to have people around. She loved the excitement. My oldest brother's wife was a real good piano player, and we had a piano. She would play, and she had a voice like Sophie Tucker, who was very prominent at that time. She would sing; she was a real good singer, and a very, very good piano player, and she'd play anything. So there was always music, and there were always people, and then all of a sudden, there's nobody there.

It was very traumatic for me, because I could see how sad she was. There was nothing I could do about it, because I was still in high school.

Lage: Were you a gregarious sort? Did you have a lot of friends in high school?

Newell: Yes, I did have a lot of friends.

Lage: Did you take after your mother or your father?

Newell: Well, actually, that's a good one. I really don't know. I guess I was probably more like my mother. I like people. I had real close friends, who are still real close friends now, that I grew up with in that period.

I remember, though, we had a football game. Saint Agnes was a small school, so we played football, basketball, baseball, all of us played all the teams, because we didn't have that many guys. We had some really good athletes there, actually. I remember this one football game, when I had had a real good day. I think I had made a couple of touchdowns. I was an end, and I caught a couple of passes, and I had done something--I was really happy, and we had beaten a team that we didn't expect to beat.

It was sad. It was a Friday, and I came home, and I was real exuberant, and I wanted to tell my mother all about the game. She likes athletics, but we didn't have a car or anything, so she never went to the games. I came home and she was sitting crying.

Lage: Oh, dear. It was really a hard time for her.

Newell: Yes. It really was.

Pete's Sporting Instinct

Lage: When did you develop this sporting instinct?

Newell: Well, I grew up playing baseball mostly. I didn't play that much basketball, but I played baseball, and in high school I played all the sports.

Lage: Were you more into it than your average young person, or than your brothers and sisters?

Newell: Oh, yes. None of my--well, my one brother went to Cal and played baseball. He pitched as a freshman at Cal. He wasn't on scholarship; he was a pretty good pitcher in high school. He was a good pitcher. He was the only one that ever competed; my dad never was in athletics.

Lage: Did you follow all the sports and know the statistics?

Newell: I followed them all, yes, very, very closely, and baseball particularly. I usually just devoured a paper from the time I could first read, yes.

Lage: But you didn't have someone in the household to really share it with?

Newell: Not really. No, that's true. I don't ever remember my brothers being--although my oldest brother would take me to baseball games every now and then. He was more into baseball than my other brothers. Don, the one who pitched, was always working, and he was more interested in playing than watching or reading. But my oldest brother would take me to baseball games when I was very young.

My mother would take me to games. I'd go with my mother in the afternoon before I ever went to school, when I was only about three or four, and we weren't in the movies or something. We lived about three or four blocks from Washington Park, which was right where Polytechnic High was, right by the Olympic Auditorium. That's where Washington Park used to be, and the Angels and the Vernon Tigers played out of that. She would take me to baseball games, and I grew up just loving baseball. I still really enjoy the sport. But it was something--boy, I couldn't wait until we'd go to the games.

Lage: Till spring rolled around.

Newell: We'd go often. She'd spend the afternoons there watching baseball. She liked to have me because she had company.

Lage: So that was an interest of your mother's?

Newell: Oh, yes. And my oldest brother followed baseball very closely, and he went to games. He never played it, though. But I did; I played baseball. In fact, I played a lot more baseball than basketball all the way through.

Lage: So that was more your focus.

Newell: And even in college, I played--I actually kind of financed myself through college--I had no intention of going to college.

Working after High School: Manual Labor, Merchant Marines

Lage: Let's talk about how you ended up going to college.

Newell: Well, when I got out of high school, it was in the early thirties. My mother had the big house there. My brothers were supporting us. My oldest brother got me a job working at U.S. Motors on Slauson, on the other side of

Vermont. I worked from twelve to eight in the morning. I remember I made fifty cents an hour, working from midnight to eight in the morning. I had to go around these machines that made the various parts for the motors, all the lathes, steel lathes. I'd have to clean out all these oily shavings, and then go through all of them and sandblast certain things that they had to have sandblasted, and then sweep. It was a real manual job, but it was a job.

Growing up before that, in ninth grade, tenth grade, eighth grade, I always had a paper route. Even before that, maybe when I was eight, nine, ten, eleven, if I wanted to go to a baseball game or a football game, which I did often down in the Coliseum, I'd ask my dad if I could use the lawn mower, and I would spot lawns that needed cutting. I would always make my money by cutting lawns to get enough money--it cost a quarter at the football game. And then I'd bum a ride or I'd get on the back of the streetcar like most kids do--

Lage: Ride on the back?

Newell: Yes. And if I had enough money, I would actually pay to get on. But that wasn't too often. On certain strict cars, the conductor was in the middle so he couldn't watch the rear cow catcher. We would stand on the catcher, hold on, and away we would go. But when the conductor was stationed at the back, he'd come and shake you off at a stop, and then you'd catch the next one and ride maybe a mile before he'd throw you off. But that's how you got around, that way and with your thumb.

So I grew up working.

Lage: You were used to the idea.

Newell: Yes, and also it taught you the value of a dollar. I relate to that commercial talking about, "He earned it, nobody gave it to him, he earned it." Well, that's what you grew up with, those days. You wanted something, you went out and you worked and you earned it, and then you got it. But you very seldom had somebody giving you something, because they didn't have that much themselves.

So anyway, I got this job, and it was a good job, in a sense, to have, because a lot of my friends had now gone to college. And here I am in this job, and I'm thinking, "Gee, there must be a better way." Because this wasn't anything that had any appeal to me. I wanted to be a baseball player; that's what I wanted to be. And as I say, I was good at baseball, I was a good baseball player.

Lage: Did you have a coach in high school or anybody who encouraged you?

Newell: Yes, I had a good coach. We had the same coach--he coached everything.

Lage: Did he encourage you to go on, either to go to college or--?

Newell: Not really. No, I don't have any recollection of that, although he was a good coach and I had a good relationship with him. But no, you didn't--you really weren't thinking of college in high school then. It isn't like now. But we did it. One of my friends was a fellow who is now a very, very prominent lawyer in a big law firm here now. He was one of our greatest golfers. He and I grew up together, Roger Kelly. And Roger and I, when we were in high school, played football and all the sports together, but he was also into golf. He was the state champion a couple of years and was nationally recognized as one of our greatest amateurs. I, of course, used to caddie him, and we were very, very close; still are.

Villanova [University] had heard about him and offered him a scholarship, and so he asked me--this was before I got out of high school--he said, "How about--would you go back there with me if I get you a scholarship?" I said, "Sure." I didn't even know where Villanova was. But I don't know what ever happened there, but I think he decided he didn't want to go back there; he found out it was cold and rainy, and there wasn't a lot of golf you could play back there in the winter. So it just kind of petered out, but that was the only time I even thought of college.

So what happened was, my oldest sister, Alice, married a fellow that was with the Dollar Line, which at that time was a major passenger-freight line. He was the chief auditor for Dollar in China, Shanghai. He told my mother that Pete ought to think about going to sea and becoming a merchant marine officer. Anything appealed to me rather than that damn job I had.

Lage: I would think so!

Newell: Yes, the job was grueling. And sometimes, because money was scarce, on Saturday I would work an extra four hours, pick up another two dollars. Then I worked from midnight to twelve noon. I'd be so tired when I'd come home, sometimes I wouldn't even get in the tub; I'd just flake out on the bed and wake up about two in the morning. I never had any kind of a social life or anything. I really didn't have much anyway, because I didn't have a car and I never had any money. So girls and that were--and that's another reason I just got so involved in sports; it was something I enjoyed doing, and it was something that didn't cost any money. [laughs]

And now my friends were kind of all into girls and dating and all, so there was a period in there where I didn't see them that much, because I'm

working on Friday night, and then Saturday night I'm dead tired from working as long as I did, so those were the two nights when they would usually date.

Lage: It wasn't a real happy time in your life.

Newell: No, it wasn't. It wasn't a happy time. It was a lot of things. It was a very --and I guess it wasn't happy because it had been so happy before.

Lage: Yes, the contrast.

Newell: I mean, the movies, it was just a short period in there where it was something you didn't want, because you wanted to be like other kids, play, and just go on with your classmates and all that, but you couldn't. Even in school it was different, because I felt--I didn't know it, but I was getting preferential treatment from the nuns, because I was in the movies, and I guess some of the other kids resented it. I never realized it, but--. And it's natural that, "He thinks he's somebody," or--but I didn't.

Lage: You were oblivious--

Newell: I really was. And I guess, even when I quit coaching, everybody said, "How could you quit coaching when you were at the top, and you had the best team, and you're coaching here [at Cal]" and all that stuff. That part of it never was any appeal to me at all. It probably forced me out of coaching more than kept me. Maybe it goes back to those early days.

Lage: The celebrity aspect of it didn't--you didn't need it?

Newell: I didn't need it, no. I didn't need it. And when I did experience it when I was younger, it was something that I'd just as soon didn't happen. And as I say, maybe deep within me, it was something that caused me to not like that part.

Lage: Maybe that was your dad's side coming out.

Newell: Probably, because he was a reclusive man, there's no doubt about it. I'm not reclusive, but even today if I'm in some place and somebody wants to introduce me, I really don't like it. I just don't. Some guys like that, they like to be recognized when they go in a restaurant or something like that. If I have a friend there that I like to see, that's a different story.

Lage: Now, how did you get to Loyola?

Newell: Yes, I'm getting there. So I leave this job in the summertime, and I've not even thought of Loyola yet, because there's no basketball team or baseball scholarship or anything like that, and there's no way I can go without a scholarship. So I go to sea.

Lage: Oh, you did go to sea?

Newell: I went to sea for--I think I made three trips. I think I spent my eighteenth birthday in Shanghai, at my sister's. Either that or Christmas. But anyway, I was away about eight or nine months, as I recall, and I was a deck cadet. Under the government's mail contract with the steamship lines, they would have three cadets on every trip. You'd have two watches of four hours apiece, four to eight and four to eight. They didn't have the merchant marine academy then, and this was the way the merchant marine supplied the officers down the road. You would be a cadet for three years or four years, and then maybe all the time you'd be progressing yourself, having to meet certain standards, and eventually you qualified to be a third officer. And then maybe thirty years later, you'd be a captain or something.

The experience really helped me later when I was in the service, because I was at sea long enough to get points that helped me get out of the service quicker. They recognized the fact that I had had sea duty. When I went aboard ship in World War II, I was an ensign. I'd been in the service for about two years as a sailor before I became an officer. But I was an ensign, and because of my background, it made me first division officer on my ship.

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Newell: I had this sea experience, so I knew about a ship and terminology. I'd been to sea, and I'd been in it long enough where they recognized that I knew about the stern of a ship--

Lage: And some of the lieutenant j.g.'s didn't.

Newell: When I went aboard, I would have been a subordinate officer normally, but when the captain looked over my log and my manual, and saw that I had this background, that's when he assigned me as first division officer. So I just stayed aboard that ship as first division officer.

Lage: Now, you made three trips in the merchant marines on the Dollar Lines?

Newell: Yes, and we went to--you've got to realize, I think I was seventeen, eighteen--went to Honolulu. From Honolulu we went to Yokohama and then Kobe. Then we went from Kobe up through the inland sea to Shanghai and

then to Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore. Then we returned. Only once did I make Singapore, come to think of it. The other times, we stopped in Manila, and then retraced everything.

I remember when the war started, or even before it started, they would write that the Japanese, in the event of a war, will be shooting back the steel that we sent over there in the form of bullets aimed at us. It was true, because we would be one of those ships that would come in, and we'd really be low in the water, because we'd have so much cargo for Japan. It usually was rails. It was railroad rails, and steel, scrap steel, scrap iron and all. Because they didn't have any of that in Japan.

We'd just come high in the water when we'd leave; we'd go to the other places, and we'd pick stuff up. But normally we'd drop it off, and then we'd retrace ourselves and pick things up. But we didn't pick up much from Japan.

Lage: So this was in the mid-thirties that you were in the merchant marines?

Newell: Mid-thirties, yes. And I did that for about three trips, about nine months.

Recruited by Jimmy Needles at Loyola University

Newell: I came home from this last trip, and I had a layover of about two, three weeks before I had to go to another ship and make the same trip. Loyola at that time had just hired Jimmy Needles--it was 1936--as a basketball coach. I had read about him, because he was a very well-known coach up in San Francisco and had a great record up there, but he'd had a little drinking problem, and I guess they just let him go.

Lage: He was at USF?

Newell: Yes; in those days it was Saint Ignatius. I guess it became USF about the time he left, or maybe a little before, little after. But he had some scholarships, scholarships in those days being tuition and books, no room, board, or anything like that, at least for basketball. But that was great.

Lage: So your friend Roger told you about that?

Newell: My friend Roger was trying to talk me out of going back and staying at sea, and he and my other friend, Tommy Murphy, who's a superior court judge, just retired over in the Burbank area. They were my high school buddies,

and they were both in law school. They had gone a year in law school, and both became lawyers. "Let's see if we can't get a scholarship."

So somehow, I'm not exactly sure how it happened, but they got me together with Jimmy, and Jimmy talked me into going to college.

Lage: Did he have you try out?

Newell: No. Those days, you didn't.

Lage: How did he know you were going to be any good?

Newell: [Laughs] In those days, the recruiting was a little crude. If somebody that you believed told you, that's the kid you took.

Lage: Times have changed.

Newell: Times have changed, yes. Now you've got to talk to an agent, even. High school kids have agents.

Now I lived in a boarding house. My mother had moved to an apartment, sold the house and moved to an apartment down on 8th Street, 8th and Alvarado. So there was a boarding house fairly close to where I lived.

Lage: Near the campus?

Newell: No. Loyola is way, way out in what was called Del Rey; it's where it is now. I got a ride from my buddies; that was one of the first things you found out at Loyola: who has a car, who drives? And I, of course, never had a car. So I got a ride. But I had a job. I had to get a job.

Basketball didn't start until about November, but I got a job. I had worked when I was in high school at Savoy Auto Park. The father of one of the kids on the football team was one of the officers for Savoy Auto Park. He was a great guy. In fact, he ran the Santa Anita [racetrack] parking lot too and got us jobs out there. So I would work in the parking lot downtown to start with, and I'd have to take the streetcar.

Lage: So you were going in both directions.

Newell: Yes. And it was really time consuming, and I never had time to even study the first year. I played basketball, and I'm working in a parking lot down in downtown and trying to finance my boarding house, and it was tough. It was really tough. I'd work extra hours on weekends; I'd work real long

hours so I could make enough money, because I couldn't make enough during regular hours. You didn't get tips--sometimes you got a quarter tip or something, but really it was just--I forget what the salary was, maybe forty cents an hour or fifty cents an hour, something like that. Whatever it was--

Lage: You had to put in a lot of hours.

Newell: Yes. You had to take a streetcar down there. And I'd get home from there often at one in the morning and then get picked up the next morning at seven o'clock. Well, I'd try to study, but you couldn't really. The parking lot was dark, and it was very difficult to study there. I thought I could, but it turned out I couldn't.

Playing Softball and Swamping for Safeway-Lucerne

Newell: So let me see what happened then. I survived that year, and I really don't know how I did. But that summer, I played softball. I was a real good softball player. Safeway had a very good softball team. They used to bring in players from all over, from Florida, from Chicago--

Lage: They sponsored a team?

Newell: Yes. Safeway-Lucerne. I wasn't playing for them, but I was playing with another team, and I'd play softball practically every night, not for any money or anything. But softball was getting bigger and bigger.

One day, I played out near Safeway-Lucerne, which was on Alameda Street near Vernon. My team was playing the Safeway team. Somehow or other, the president of Lucerne, who was really a fan, came out because it was right across the street from his office. He came out to watch the game this night, and I had a real good night.

So he told the manager of the team to ask me if I'd like to play for Safeway. I said, "Yeah." I was playing on a lot of teams, and Safeway's was a lot bigger team than any of mine. But the team we played was not their A team. I didn't know that, but they had a team with practically professionals. That's the one he wanted me to play for, which I then did. And he gave me a job swamping on a truck--

Lage: What's swamping on a truck?

Newell: A swamper on a truck is not the driver. The driver, he runs the truck. The swamper is the one that does a lot of the physical work, although you both do it--

Lage: Loading and unloading?

Newell: Loading and unloading, yes. The driver, he goes in and makes sure what the store wants, in terms of crates, and in the meantime I'm taking them off the back of the truck. It was a great job. God, I loved that job, because--it was in the summertime, and we'd start off at six in the morning. I only had to work three days a week, but I'd work about fourteen hours a day, but it wasn't really work, because the driver-- He'd had me entered with him in a horseshoe tournament in Ontario--[laughing] We went all the way to San Berdoo [San Bernardino], you know, with milk.

And we had a real good softball team. We should have won the national title. We got to the national championships in St. Louis; we got beat in the final game.

Lage: So this was really a semi-pro team. Did you get paid to play?

Newell: They paid me--yes, they paid me. I'm trying to think what they paid me. Oh, yes, they paid me to play until the summer, and then when the summer came, they gave me the job, which was the big thing. But what I made playing for them kept me in school.

Lage: And it was compatible with going to school?

Newell: Oh, yes, because it was just playing at night and after school, but I played baseball, too, when I was at Loyola.

Lage: So you were playing at Loyola and softball--

Newell: Softball at night. Softball would start about April, late April, you warm up. I'd play that until--well, I'd play it all through the summer. We had a league at Loyola. We drew as many people as the Pacific Coast League team did. We had girls. See, girls' teams at that time were sponsored by Bob Hope and Bing Crosby and others like that. I remember the Bing Crosby Croonerettes, and the Bob Hope something-or-other.

Lage: So there were girls' softball teams?

Newell: Yes, girls' softball teams. It's funny about those girls' softball teams, because one of the girls who was a very great pitcher, one of the best pitchers, was Gail Goodrich's [professional basketball player] mother. And

another--what the heck, I forget what her name was--but she had three sons that became very, very prominent, two of them baseball players. All three of them played up at Stanford, and were tremendous. Her name was Millie Guess when she played. Sutherland was her married name. But all these gals played at the same time we were playing. They played the preliminary game, and we'd play the second game.

Lage: So did you get to know them?

Newell: Yes. But, you know, just on the field. We never dated or anything with them at that time. Again, I never had any money really to date. But I had a full calendar; I was busy enough doing the things I liked to do and things I had to do, and between that, you just didn't have a lot of time.

Academics and Basketball at Loyola, 1936-1939

Lage: How about studies? Did you ever get into the academic world at Loyola?

Newell: Not really. Yes, I got by. I was a political science major. My freshman year, I was lucky to stay in school, because I didn't have the grades. But Father Coughlin, the dean, realized that with the schedule I had I really didn't have a good chance--some guys could have made it, but what I was trying to do, I just couldn't do. I was trying to do too many things, and none of them blended really. When you have to take a streetcar down to work at five-thirty or six [p.m.], and come home at one, and then get picked up at, say, seven, seven-fifteen, seven-thirty in the morning, as I recall, to go to school out there to Loyola, and then practice basketball after, maybe from two to four, four-thirty, get a ride home all the way from there and then--

Lage: Off to the parking lot.

Newell: Yes, off to the parking lot.

Lage: So the dean was understanding?

Newell: Yes. He let me return after the freshman year even though my grades weren't really acceptable. I didn't flunk everything, but I did have a failure, and I had a couple of D's, so that would have disqualified me from re-entry. But the second year, things worked out through the softball and all, and my load lightened, so I was able to stay. But baseball was really my chief focus.

Lage: More than basketball?

Newell: Yes, it really was. But Jimmy Needles was the one who taught me basketball. He taught me the game.

Lage: Let's talk about Jimmy Needles, because he seems like an important figure.

Newell: Oh, he was. Jimmy Needles in my life was the reason for any success or any advancement I ever had. He not only kept me going in college, got me to go to college, but kind of kept an eye on me, and he was very supportive. He understood, too. I think he's the one that talked the priest into letting me come in the second year. When my eligibility was finished, he got me a job at Saint John's Military Academy, because I had to still go to another year to complete my degree. I couldn't take a full load, because I had to work. So I probably could have done it in one semester if that was all I was doing, but I had to finish a thesis. That was one thing, you had to finish a thesis then at a Jesuit school before they would give you your degree.

I picked maybe the worst subject in the history of the world. [laughter] I did; I picked neutrality, from World War I to World War II. Well, when I started writing the damn thing, we weren't in war. And Roosevelt is--

Lage: That's a big subject.

Newell: Yes, it really was. I spent so many hours in the library downtown, because I lived then with my mother on 8th and Alvarado. I would walk down--I walked, too; as I look now, it was a damn long walk, but I would walk all the way down to the library down on Flower Street in downtown L.A. researching this. A thesis is very, very difficult to write, because your own opinions can only be expressed in the final conclusion. Your bibliography has to be so precise and exact and all.

Lage: And you were doing this as war was coming.

Newell: Yes, and that's why I was so goddarn mad at that Roosevelt. He's talking about money changers in the temple, and I'm building my whole thesis on, "We have a president now that recognizes we're not going to be brought into a war,"; that is the theme that I'm supporting based all these things that I've read, and statements that are supportive of him. And now he makes a 180-degree turn. Now they're saying, "Well, we've got to go to war," and to this day, I will always believe that, because I did a lot of research on Pearl Harbor, that Pearl Harbor was a setup, that they knew, that Washington lured us into this nationalism thing where they bombed Pearl Harbor, they knew it was coming.

Lage: You mean you feel they sort of lured the Japanese into bombing Pearl Harbor?

Newell: Sure. Into doing it, sure. They knew that the Japanese had to either fight or give in on certain areas because there was the militaristic Tojo in control there, and so they just forced the issue and gave the Japanese really no alternative but to go to war. And if they're going to go to war, they didn't have a chance unless they struck first. But they knew--well, I don't want to get into that. They knew in Washington that it was coming, it was imminent, and sent things by regular mail rather than courier, by even phone. But that's why we weren't prepared. A lot of people died because--.

Political Views

Lage: Were your family Democrats or Republicans?

Newell: Oh, it was a mixed bag. I remember growing up, my mother was a Democrat. I had a couple of brothers that were strict Republicans. My dad was neutral, but my dad knew more about all of it than any of them. But he'd say the least. But when he would say something, everybody would listen. He was probably more Democrat than he was Republican, but my mother, she was a Roosevelt man from the word go. One of my brothers had no use for Roosevelt. I don't know exactly what his problem was, but he didn't, and then my other brother in college, Don, he wasn't as anti-Roosevelt, but he was more Republican.

Lage: Did you consider yourself a Democrat?

Newell: I never even considered either. I kept wondering why they would keep arguing all the time. This was when I was younger.

Lage: When you were younger; but I mean as you were growing up and doing your thesis?

Newell: No, I probably was more Republican. Yes, actually, I'd say I leaned more toward their platforms, because it seems to be a little more consistent with what free enterprise and all this country was built upon, rather than restrictive kind of measures that some of the unions bring in and some of the feather-bedding that we've had in the railroad industry, and some of the--. To me, the Democrats lean so much closer to the Communists, and being a political science major, you dealt with the politics of each country. The Russians--it was very, very difficult for an American to adopt that kind of

thinking, although we did have so many, in the arts especially, that became card-carriers privately.

But I wasn't a McCarthyite; I never believed in McCarthyism. But I did believe that there were subversives--and at Berkeley, too, there were a lot of subversive forces up there that wanted to create problems, and any time there was an issue that they thought they could get their teeth in, and make it a public issue, they would do it, if for no other reason than to get the notoriety of having the stand and enlisting more people for their stand.

But I never felt that communism was an answer to anything. It's so self-defeating. If you ever really studied Karl Marx and his philosophies, there is only one party. They didn't say, "We are going to absorb the elitist party." Instead it was, "We're going to exterminate them." It's that clear, in the Communist Manifesto, that you exterminate, you don't--. And they did.

##

A Short Stint in Professional Baseball: The Cotton States League

Lage: Tell me about your short stint as a baseball player in the Cotton League.

Newell: The Cotton States League, yes. During my senior year at Loyola, I hit over .400 in the baseball. I was always a better baseball player than I was a basketball player. I was playing Sunday ball, and a scout from the Brooklyn Dodgers, I think his name was Tom Downey, somebody said he ought to watch me. I was a very good softball player, and actually that was my best sport, the fast-pitch softball. I actually earned my way through college playing softball in kind of an industrial league in Los Angeles. It was very, very popular then. I played for Safeway-Lucerne.

Lage: I think we talked about that.

Newell: Yes. I had a pretty good reputation as a softball player and it kind of spilled over to baseball, although I played baseball all the time too. I was playing on this Sunday team and he [Downey] followed me, and then again at the college, against Saint Mary's one day, I think I had four or five hits, and he was there at the game. But I played basketball and baseball at the same time at Loyola. In fact, I went out and pitched a game against USC one day, right at the end of basketball season, and then played a basketball game that night.

Lage: So you pitched as well?

Newell: I pitched the game during the day against USC. I pitched for nine innings, too. Then I went and played a basketball game that night. In those days, we didn't have that many athletes, so we had to kind of do double duty at Loyola.

So I was signed, and I went back in early June.

Lage: Was it a Dodger farm team?

Newell: It was a Dodger farm team, yes, and it was Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in the Cotton States League. But I hadn't played that much baseball for about a month before, for a lot of reasons: school, exams, and a lot of things that came up. I hadn't anticipated even trying out for professional baseball, let alone going that far away. But anyway, he signed me. In those days, signing meant getting a train ticket to wherever it was you were going.

Lage: Not much money?

Newell: Oh, no, hell no. I don't know. I think seventy-five dollars a month, something like that. But it was an experience, and it was great that I played it.

But because I hadn't played, my hands were soft, in terms of being calloused. I got a bone bruise in my hand. I hit a ball early one morning. We had a double header. It was kind of cold, and I hit it, and I got a bone bruise on my hand. I had to put a sponge rubber on it, but still the pain was there. You flinch a little when you get pain like that. I should have just rested it. But it just kept getting worse. And then I had to put a sponge in my glove. It was my left hand, and I was a right-handed thrower.

So one time I went out, I got right under a fly ball, and it hit the sponge, and it went about as high up in the air as--[laughter] So that was a real downer. It's hard enough to make it when everything's going right, but when you're hurt and you're trying--. So anyway, that's all I played.

I came back, and I went into coaching as soon as I could, in September.

Lage: Yes. Did the game intrigue you as a game, baseball?

Newell: Oh, I've always loved baseball. I coached baseball at USF when I was there for five years. Then I was George Wolfman's assistant for a couple of years at Cal; the year we won the NCAA I was his assistant.

Lage: So the strategy and all the things you liked about basketball--

Newell: Yes. It's such a change from basketball, because in baseball, you can say whatever you want to the umpire as long as you don't go out there and say it to his face. You can say a lot of things from the dugout--not everything you want, but--. But in basketball, they'll throw a technical at you. They only throw you out of the game in baseball.

Baseball was a different sport. It's slow compared to basketball, and there's so much time between pitches that baseball players think up a lot of funny things to say. The dugouts can be hilarious, especially if you get a clown there, and he can just invent funny things. Baseball is a fun sport, yes, it is. If you understand it, and I always felt I understood baseball pretty well. Every pitch and every situation brings in a lot of possibilities in your mind, whether you're watching or you're playing it.

I enjoy watching baseball, too. What bothers me about going to baseball games now, the parking lots, getting in and out of the bloody game.

Lage: And the games are so long now, too.

Newell: Yes, I know. Games used to be a lot quicker. It's like basketball before television. Now with television, you've got to watch the officials about a third of the game, go through their gesticulations, and they all look like they're trying to get an Academy Award. [laughter] But in baseball--even that's in baseball now. The umpires all have a distinctive style of calling the strike. As they say, they all have their shtick. But it's a great sport, and I enjoy it, and follow it. I don't go to see as many games as I did.

Lage: One other thing that I want to return to, we talked about your mother, who sounded like a wonderful person.

Newell: Yes.

Lage: We left her at kind of a sad time in her life, where everything--

Newell: Yes. It was, at that particular time, because everybody left home at the same time practically, except me.

Lage: Did things turn around for her at all?

Newell: Well, yes. She got an apartment. She lived down at 8th and Alvarado, in her own apartment. All the memories of the house she kind of left behind, so there weren't the remembrances that you have in a big old house, that so much of your life is tied in with. It was her place, and it was the first time

she'd ever lived like that. I think the novelty of living like that really was great. People would come and visit her, and she was a very gregarious woman anyway. She made friends easily. So she enjoyed very, very much that life there.

Lage: Did she follow your sporting activities at all?

Newell: Oh, yes, yes. She was very much into it. She followed me when I was playing softball at Loyola Field in Los Angeles. We had about as many people watch our softball games as they did the Coast League in those days. She'd come out, she had a friend, and they would come out the two of them, not every time I played, but a lot of times.

But in basketball, see, I was up north. I was at USF, and she really never got a chance to see my teams. She died before I won the NIT championship, which then was the national championship. It really bugged me. No, maybe she was living then--she was living then. She died when I was at Michigan State--that was it. She wasn't able to get up to see the big parade they had for our team down Market Street, and a big lunch at the Fairmont. I know that Florence's folks came up for it, and a couple of my sisters did, but she didn't; her health was not good.

Lage: She must have enjoyed the idea--

Newell: Oh, yes, yes. Well, she was very much into things that were modern. She never did seem to mentally ever grow old.

Lage: That's great.

II MENTORS, COACHES, AND PRIESTS, AT LOYOLA AND BEYOND

Important Lessons from Jimmy Needles and UCLA Track Coach, Cap Trotter

Lage: I got you off the track there! You were talking about Pearl Harbor and your thesis on neutrality, but first we were talking about Jimmy Needles and how he influenced you.

Newell: Yes. Jimmy did--I'll just go over the many things that he did for me. He got me the Saint John's job. He got me interested in coaching and made me believe that even though it was kind of a humble beginning it really wasn't; when you're coaching, there's no such thing as a humble beginning or ending. I mean, you're coaching, and it's something that you almost feel a need to do, once you get into it, if you feel that you like the relationship with the players, the teaching, the real self-pride that you get in helping somebody become a better person, or a better player, or both. It's much more satisfying than any material gain that you could get.

I always knew this when I was a kid playing, and I was always a good player. We'd choose up sides and play in vacant lots. I'd always give the other guy the first pick, that kind of thing. I don't know why, but I always liked to have the sides even. I never wanted to have all the good players on my side; I didn't want the other guy to have all the good players. But I like the competitiveness, to have a good game. It was never my way to say, "I want this guy because he's good and he's good."

When I was in junior high school--I went to Berendo Junior High School--in the ninth grade, and that was a great experience there, because we had a fellow by the name of Cap [Harry] Trotter, who was the coach at UCLA track for many, many years [1919-1946] and a real legend in UCLA

track history. Cap was the--I don't know what his title was, but I'd call him the athletic officer or the athletic head of Berendo Junior High School.

Lage: What's the name of the school?

Newell: Berendo. That's a street just west of Vermont, around Pico, between Pico and--

Lage: So this was sort of a break from Saint Agnes?

Newell: Yes. I left Saint Agnes for a year and a half and went to Berendo. Cap had this league formed, really organized. I didn't realize it at the time, but he had an effect on me. He was so well organized. Sometimes, when we had a rainout game, we'd get to school at six-thirty in the morning, because school started at eight-fifteen, and play the game before school would start.

Lage: He had a real kind of discipline.

Newell: Oh, and he had batting averages and pitching averages, and he had a draft, he would have the captains of the team in, and they would sit down, and they'd draft their players.

Lage: Were you a captain?

Newell: Well, the first semester, no, because--all the guys knew me because I'd played against them, but he didn't know me. But the second semester, yes, he made me a captain. This was good, because as captain you really had a responsibility, you felt, to get your guys there at the game, and if you screwed up, a kid didn't run out a pop fly or something like that, he'd say, "All right, run Western." That meant that you had to run all the way from Berendo to Western, and he'd time you. He'd know how long it would take, and if you--

Lage: The whole team?

Newell: Well, he may run the whole team or whatever player screwed up. But if all your team didn't show up, he may have your whole team run. Of course, this would really cause those guys that didn't show up to be there the next time, because you'd let them know that, "I'm not going to run that damn thing because of you; I'm going to get ready." And you could make a trade. See, they had a peanut league, and if a guy was not performing, we would trade down to the peanut league and bring a guy up from the peanut league. It ran just like a major league and a minor league.

Lage: Were they all kids in the school?

Newell: All kids in the school, yes. It just taught me something I think was a strength of mine in coaching--organization and use of time. If you're organized, how much good use of time you can make.

Lage: It sounds a lot like what I've heard about your practices.

Newell: Well, I think I was well organized at practice, and I think I learned along the way, I learned from--

Lage: Did Needles have an organized program like that?

Newell: Oh, yes, but we had a terrible time at Loyola.

##

Newell: That was the ninth grade. Then I went from there to L.A. High, and--

Lage: Oh, you did go to L.A. High?

Newell: Yes. I went to L.A. High, but I only went there I think a semester, and then I went back to Saint Agnes. But this was an important part of learning how to manage athletics like Cap Trotter did. I didn't realize at the time, but he was--

Lage: It must have clicked with you.

Newell: He did so many things. I'll never forget, if you got into any kind of an altercation with somebody out there, in the course of a game or something, he'd walk out, "All right, go on in--" he had a bungalow. He had boxing gloves, and he'd give you each a pair of gloves, and you'd go in there. He may not even stay in there and watch. So you got an idea, if you were going to get in altercations, you'd better be ready to fight, because he'd take you in there and give you the gloves, so you had to fight. Things like that.

In his own way, I think he did a hell of a job of teaching people to get along and abide by rules, discipline, and organization. He had the batting averages, the pitching averages, and he had the playoffs, where the first-half winner of the eight teams played the second-half winner. And the same down there with the peanut league. I'd heard about it, and that's one reason I wanted to go, because so many of the kids I played with in the summer and after school were kids who went there.

Growing Up in an Ethnically Diverse Los Angeles Neighborhood

Newell: See, I grew up in an area where--it was an ethnic area, although there were not a lot of blacks. There was a black family on our street, which was one of the only black families. I never knew them, but I remember his yard was the best-kept, and the house was--it was just neat and all that. It was kind of strange, because--I'm talking about when I was young--there weren't any other black families. And he always seemed to be such a friendly person. I always got a good impression of them.

And then, at Berendo, there were many Asian, Japanese. I had two or three of them on my team. And at Washington Playground when I was younger, we used to play there. We had a team that won the city championship at our twelve-and-under, and our pitcher was a Japanese kid. In fact, we about two or three of the players were Japanese. So I grew up in an ethnic--

Lage: Were there other ethnic mixes there?

Newell: At the Washington Playground, there weren't too many black players, but there were some black players. There weren't a lot of other playgrounds at that time.

Lage: Were there many of Mexican background?

Newell: There were not that many. More of the Mexican population was more east, more toward downtown. And the black population was the other side of Jefferson. That used to be kind of a dividing line, it seemed.

But the Japanese were down around where Koreatown is now, down 8th and 9th, right in that area. I remember on Saturdays, because some of our best players we had were Japanese, but they were Nisei. They had to go to Japanese language school every Saturday morning, and we'd be playing football and baseball, softball. You would have to wait for them. We'd stand out by the school there where they had to go to temple, and, "Come on, let's go!" I don't know who their teacher was, but I think he was sick and tired of us out there shouting him down, "Come on, hurry up, hurry up, let's go!"

And Pearl Harbor was really a sad time for me, for a lot of reasons, but right after that, so many of these kids I grew up with were interned. I couldn't believe it, because they were as American as I was, I felt, and then to find out that they didn't intern any Germans or any other--Italians--who were on the other side, they were the Axis, but the Japanese they sent to

Manzanar and the other places. You didn't know exactly who went where, but you did know that they were gone and possessions were taken, their homes, and their--. It was, for anybody that had had association with them, grew up with them, and played with them, it was a trauma, because it was so unfair. These were--not like your own family, but certainly, you felt, just as American as you were.

Lage: Playing the American game of baseball.

Newell: Sure, that's right. And after the war, I got to know some of these people, but that Japanese-American division that went over to Europe, most of them were from Hawaii. They were the most decorated company, I don't know if it was a company or a corps or what it was, but it was an infantry group, but most decorated of any group we've ever had in this country, which shows just what they were proving, that they were Americans. They and their families should never have been dealt with that way. And to my knowledge, there was never one sign of, in this country, on the mainland or in Hawaii, of any espionage. There never was.

Lage: Hysteria, really.

Newell: Yes, it was hysteria, exactly. And it was fed, again, by Washington, because they had to make our entry into the war believable, because they had been preaching neutrality for so long, [laughing] as I know from my thesis. That probably made it even worse for me, because although I wasn't a great political scientist, but I liked political science, and once I got into a major, I became a better student, I believe.

Lage: Did you have to rewrite your thesis, then?

Newell: I had to rearrange it. That's why I didn't get the thing in time, because there were so many things, there were so many contradictions.

Father Vincent Lloyd: Offering the Ball of Knowledge

Newell: I had a great English teacher, when I think of it there, Father Vincent Lloyd. He was a lay teacher; he was not a Jesuit. He was something. He was probably the brightest man I ever met in my life, in terms of scholastics. I remember I put in a paper one time to him, and he returned it. He said, "Dear Peter, you shall never get the basket of success without the ball of knowledge." [laughter] I've never forgotten that, and I've used it, too.

Lage: That's a good one.

Newell: Yes. I read it, and I got a kick. So I went up to him, "I understand, Father. I understand you." He was great, though. He knew nothing about basketball.

Lage: He knew you played it, though.

Newell: He knew I played it, and we had so many basketball players, he started to go to the games. I tell you, he was very selective of who he'd let go into his class, he really was. But he liked us. We really worked, we really tried in that class. It was a class I really looked forward to, because he was so different than any other priest. He came from a very, very rich background. He drove a Cadillac. He was always late for class. If you had an eight-fifteen class, about eight-thirteen you'd just see a cloud of dust coming. He was always just winding--you could see the road, and we'd be up here in the class. We could see the road--we can't see his car, but we can see the dust. He'd come in there, and invariably, he'd park at the same place and forget to put on the emergency or the thing. He'd jump out of it and start running, and the car's still moving. It always hit the same bloody thing. He'd look over the same way, and he'd be like, "Jeez, I forgot to do it again." That happened--.

Then he'd get up there, and this is where he departed from most of the teachers at that time. He'd take off his collar, and take off his coat and vest and he'd have on the wildest Hawaiian polo shirt, or--

Lage: Really? Now, that was very different at that time.

Newell: Very, very different, oh, yes. And it kind of set the tone for the class. It was really an interesting class, and he was a very interesting teacher.

Lage: Was it a writing class, or literature?

Newell: It was literature.

Lage: You described him as being a lay person?

Newell: A lay person in the sense that he wasn't a Jesuit.

Lage: He wasn't a Jesuit, but he was a priest?

Newell: He was a priest, yes. He taught at the girls' college, Marymount I think--now Saint Mary's; Marymount. He was a priest, and I just don't know what denomination. We used to call him a lay teacher. He acted like a lay

teacher. But I'm not sure what order he was. A scholastic order of some kind. But he was a oner, and he later ended up after the war in a parish in San Juan Capistrano. Some of the guys used to go up and see him up there.

Lage: When you say some of the guys, were these fellow basketball players?

Newell: Yes, and guys that--

Lage: Sounds like he got interested.

Newell: Yes, he got very much involved in basketball and interested in it; he was not an athlete, or even looked like an athlete. He looked just like he was: he was an Englishman, from England, and he had the English accent and all. He was a delightful guy.

Lasting Influence of Jesuit Ethical Teaching

Lage: Was the Jesuit teaching something that was important in your development?

Newell: Very, very important. I took a moral ethics class from a Father Vaughn, and that probably was the most important tenet that I learned--I learned a number of them from this moral ethics class, but this one was, "You don't do a bad act to bring about a good result." It's the end and the means thing. He would preach that, and he would repeat it and repeat it, and give examples of exactly what it meant. It really boils down to, in coaching, you don't violate the rules in recruiting; you don't misuse a player to win a game when maybe he shouldn't be playing because of an injury or whatever.

It's, as I say, a real good tenet I think to have in coaching, because there always are people that want to involve themselves in your program for whatever reason, sometimes their own ego, and they want to pay players and create a double standard, and I never believed in that.

I think most of the players you talk to would tell you that I was always more concerned with the twelfth player on my team than I was with the number-one player, because I felt that he would give so much, in terms of practice and time and all, and receive so little of the benefits, in terms of notoriety, recognition and things like that. I always tried to make my players understand that and make them understand that one player who doesn't play much in games, is not less important than the one that scores all the points.

This became very much a part of our whole philosophy at Cal, and at other places I coached. Even to this day at Michigan State, I was there four years, and the players I had there in those four years, they still meet. They still meet, and I just got a little group of pictures from them here. Not all of them, but there are about twenty, twenty-five that were at this last reunion. I was going to make it, and I became ill just the night before. I was supposed to leave early the next morning, I was packed, all ready to go, and I got one of those bugs, and I just couldn't get out of bed. I didn't for two days. But it was funny, it's the only day I was sick all year. It was something I was really looking forward to, because it had some of the fellows I hadn't seen for a while.

They all don't make it every year, but a lot of them do make it. The same group makes it, and then every year there will be another five or six or eight that didn't make it before. I think that it's something that you're very proud of in coaching, that you don't have to win championships in coaching to have a real fine inner feeling. If you really feel that basketball was a good experience in the college life of these players, you feel that you've done the job. Now, if you happen to win a championship--

Lage: You won't turn it down.

Newell: No, no. And no, you're real proud that you can win a championship within the rules, and when you do--you see, the most important thing, I think, in coaching is respect--that if you play for me, you respect me and I respect you. One of the things I think that goes back to the Jesuit background I had was that you don't cloud that with a rationale that, "Well, it's important that they like me. And by liking me, I'm giving them something that makes their life that much easier in terms of money, a car, whatever," which is all part of the recruiting process, that kind of recruiting process.

I always felt that respect was much more important. I was not that worried whether the players liked me or not, but I was worried that they would respect me. For them to respect me, I have to stay within the rules, because if I don't stay within the rules, they could like me, but they can't respect me. And I can't really respect them, because they broke the rules, too.

And I think UCLA, between you and me, is an example--. None of those championship teams meet as teams. Because they operated differently than we did. I think that they may say respect, but there isn't respect, because they know they did it illegally. As great as they were, and as great as those teams were, they still didn't do it within the rules. I think it's reflected that they don't get together, they don't have the same respect

for each other. Our guys do. And our guys [the Cal team of 1959]--I just got a call last night on our five-year reunion.

Lage: Every five years the team meets?

Newell: Every five years we meet, and we're meeting at the Quail Lodge [in Carmel Valley] again. We all look forward to it, and it isn't like the championship season kind of a thing, it's just the fact that we love each other in our own way, and we were very proud of each other, and we really care.

Lage: They look after one another?

Newell: Yes, they really do. And there's a real concern when one person is having some setbacks of any kind, health, business, or whatever.

USC Coach Sam Barry and the Catalina Island Summer Camp

Newell: But to get back to Jimmy--

Lage: Oh, Jimmy! We keep putting Jimmy aside.

Newell: Yes. And then, you see, during the war, I was an enlisted man. I enlisted, believe it or not, in Great Lakes, because I had this background of having gone to sea. I taught seamanship, and I also played on the basketball team; didn't play much. I went back there originally because they had this athletic program at the time, a Tunney program [headed by former heavyweight champion Gene Tunney]. But they also had a basketball team back there, and Sam Barry, the USC coach who was a good friend of Jimmy's and was really a real good friend of mine even before I got into college coaching--Sam Barry is a legend at USC.

Lage: Now, where did you meet him?

Newell: I played against him at Loyola in baseball and basketball, and Jimmy and Sam were very close, and their philosophy of playing the game was close. When I coached at Saint John's Military Academy, obviously a lot of the kids were rich kids. Sam, with the athletic director at USC, had a summer camp on Catalina Island. It was at that time an expensive camp. He and Jimmy were talking one day, and Jimmy told him, "Maybe Pete's got some kids over there that have enough money, would want to go."

So Sam contacted me and he made a deal with me for every kid I could get, he'd give me fifty dollars for every kid. Then I'd come over and be a counselor. And part of the deal was that on Saturday morning, he'd give me a horse, and I could ride into Avalon, and I could play for the Avalon baseball team on Saturday and Sunday--this is true!

Lage: [laughing] This is a great package deal!

Newell: Yes, it was the greatest deal I ever made. I knew a guy there, because I was playing on the baseball team, who would get me a place to stay Saturday night in the cabanas. They have those cabanas over there. And of course, I played for nothing--I would have almost paid to play, it was a really great thing--and then as I say, I'd ride the horse in and--

Lage: Had you ridden horses before?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure. I wasn't John Wayne or anything, but I'd ridden, sure. One of the guys on the team worked for the stable. So the guy that ran the team got my horse housed there for nothing and fed for nothing. So I'd leave the horse there until I'd pick him up Sunday afternoon, and then ride back. Ride into the sunset, and get back just before it got dark, and of course have a great time for that Saturday playing baseball, and Saturday a lot of guys from school would be there. They knew I was over there, so I'd see them. Then Sunday, I'd play baseball again. We'd play Sunday. And then I'd leave late in the afternoon and go on back to the camp.

Lage: Was this still while you were at Loyola?

Newell: No, this was when I was coaching at Saint John's.

Lage: So about 1940, '41?

Newell: Yes. It was great. That's how I got to know Sam.

Then, when I started coaching, Sam was really, really helpful to me, because he and Jimmy played similar kinds of offenses. He did a few things different than Jimmy, and it kind of broadened me, because it's always important that you know more--not that you know more, but that you try to broaden your base.

A Broadened Base: Mentors from the World War II Years

Coach Tony Hinkle at Great Lakes Naval Base

Newell: For instance, when I was at Great Lakes, I played on the basketball team there. I didn't play a lot, but it was very, very important for me, because I played under a coach that was a very famous coach in the Middle West, Tony Hinkle.

His approach was altogether different than Jimmy's offensively. He taught me how to break down an offense. He broke down his offense into separate component drills. This was one of the main reasons our team was so efficient, because we taught basketball one-on-one, two-two, three-three.

Lage: And that's where you first got that idea?

Newell: Yes, from Coach Tony Hinkle at Great Lakes.

Lage: Was Great Lakes a navy team?

Newell: Yes, Great Lakes was the biggest naval base in the country.

Lage: There were quite a few military base teams during the war, is that right?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure. A lot of them just got into athletes just to have teams represent the bases. Yes, they used them for recruiting.

Lage: So you started out playing basketball for the navy, and then went onto a ship?

Newell: Well, I was in the navy at Great Lakes, which was about thirty-five miles from Chicago. I was there about two months, and then Florence came back and we were married in Chicago. Then she worked in Chicago for about a year. We were living in an apartment in north Chicago. She became pregnant about--oh, after we were there about eight months, and then after about two months, three months, then she came home to L.A. with her folks.

Assignment to Moffett Field

Newell: Then I applied for--I was teaching seamanship, and I applied for Bainbridge, which was a physical education or Tunney program. That way, I could get maybe an assignment to the West Coast. So the idea was to try to get at a base that would be close to home when young Pete was born.

And jeez, I'll never forget that. I got to Bainbridge, and it was November, and Red Auerbach [legendary basketball coach]--this was where I first met Red.

Lage: Oh, goodness, you met a lot of people in the navy.

Newell: Yes, we became great friends. Oh, Joe Kuharick and a lot of the guys that I coached with, I got to know at Great Lakes. Joe was godfather for my son Tommy. So it was great. The war was not an unpleasant experience in any way for me.

But when I got there, you went into this room, and there are 124 in your company, and they tell you the assignments. Normally, there were a lot of assignments on the West Coast. It was really important for me to get an assignment in the West. Well, I get in that room, and I find out that there's about fifty guys that have all put in their priority as West Coast. I don't have any juice, and I'm a West Coast guy; I'm the only really West Coast guy in there, but these guys all want to go West.

Lage: Just for fun.

Newell: Yes. Well, yes. The bases out there are better, and the weather's better, and it's a chance for California and all that, and I don't think I have a chance of a snowman in hell. And to this day, I don't know how it ever happened. Something caused it to happen. But I had written--there was a Father Donovan at Loyola Law School who was a great guy. I got to know him because my two friends, Roger Kelly and Tommy Murphy, were both at Loyola. I would spend time down there waiting for them, we'd go somewhere, and I didn't live that far from Loyola when I was at 8th and Alvarado. So I got to know Father Donovan. Smokey Joe, we called him Smokey Joe. He was a great guy, and he loved these two friends of mine. They were two of his favorites.

He had been a chaplain, and he knew all these big shots. He never would say so, but my friend Roger later told me that he knew all these people. Now, when I go into the service, of course I'm gone and he knows I'm gone, because my friends have told him. So when I'm there at

Bainbridge, it was so important, and I didn't know anybody, really. I wrote Rog, and I said, "If you get a chance, tell Smokey--"

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Newell: He had met my wife, too. And I asked him if there were any possible way, if he knew anybody back here at Bainbridge, that he can help me get assigned to the West Coast. I'd forgotten all about it. I wrote him as soon as I got back there, never realizing that when I got in that room, there was only one assignment for the West. It was at Moffett Field.

Lage: One assignment?

Newell: One assignment for the West. They were all for the East. When the guy wrote out the assignments--he announced where the assignments were, but he didn't announce the names. He said, "When I announce your name, I'll--." And I tell you, I was crushed. Some of these guys were bragging about who they knew, and that they were assured that they were going to get this or they were going to get that, and all of them, it seemed they were talking about California.

And they called the names, and this one assignment never showed up. And I'll be darned if when it comes to me, I get it-- Moffett Field, which was a great, great base. The guys all looked at me when it was all over, "Who in the hell do you know?" I said, "Honest to God, I don't know anybody." Now, Red Auerbach knew everybody. Red Auerbach, he and Roosevelt, and everybody else, they were bosom buddies. Red got the assignment he wanted, too. He was at Saint Albans, the hospital in New York state.

So I went to Moffett Field. When I went there, I got a chance to spend some time with Jimmy. Jimmy was back up in San Francisco working for the University of San Francisco as business manager, and I was able to get into San Francisco. I got a great assignment.

Lage: Were you in basketball at Moffett Field?

Newell: Yes. I played basketball there, and I played baseball, too. I was in the recreation part at that time. But I was a chief now. I had gone from second class petty officer, and then a first, and then chief petty officer. Second class, first class, then chief.

One time, they had a big basketball game at San Francisco. The captain wanted to go, and it was a sellout. You couldn't get tickets. It was between Hank Luisetti and Jim Pollard, who were two of the great players. They were on different teams. It was really a classic match-up and game.

Lage: Were they on military teams?

Newell: Oh, yes. Hank was at Fleet City, and Jim was at one of the local naval bases; I forget what the name of it was.

So I called Jimmy, I said, "Hey Jimmy, you can really do me a favor. Can you get me two tickets for this game?" He'd already gotten me one for myself. "God," he said, "that's a tough one. But I'll get it for you, don't worry." If Jimmy said he could get it, he could get it. So I got these two tickets for the captain.

And I want to tell you, boy, I just went right up to the top from that point on, anything I ever did. He gave me a seventy-two hour pass to go down and see Florence, and he said, "If you have to extend, just get the word up to my secretary and I'll fix it." It was great. I told Jimmy later, "Those two passes were gold, Jimmy." That base was great. It was a real happy base, and the commander that I worked for was just a peach of a guy. It was about as good a duty as you could ever have.

I saw a lot of Jimmy then. Jimmy was encouraging me when I got out of the service to stay in coaching, which I wanted to do, because I really enjoyed coaching. At Saint Johns, I never lost a game in anything. My football, my basketball, my baseball, my track team, we won everything in the military league every year, the three years I was there. We never lost anything.

Lage: So you really must have felt you found something--

Newell: Yes, I had a lot of success, and my teams were good, and I felt that was my niche in life. I liked what I was doing, and I was in it for the right reasons. I didn't know it at the time, but I was. I just enjoyed kind of helping kids become better athletes, and at the same time, learn a lot of the important things that they're going to have to learn in life, about getting along with people and being more of a team player than a selfish individual, and all that.

World War II's Influence on the Basketball Styles

Lage: I've talked in other oral histories with scientists, for instance, who had research assignments in World War II, and everybody says this was a great period for the advancement of so many scientific disciplines. Now, was this true of basketball as well?

Newell: Well, obviously it was true of me in my--

Lage: Your own career, but what about all of these people coming together from different parts of the country, and playing and coaching--

Newell: Playing together, you mean?

Lage: Yes. Did this--?

Newell: Well, it was fine, because for thing, if you played on a base team, you got extra privileges. And that alone was enough to make you harmonious. [laughter] Because you look around and see some guy peeling potatoes or something, and you're going to eat the potato that he's peeling, rather than peeling the potato he's going to eat--

Lage: And you're playing basketball.

Newell: Yes, because you're playing basketball.

Lage: Did it advance the game, though? Did the game change from having this intermixing of players and coaches from different regions--?

Newell: No, not at that time. At that time, the game was at a standstill, because there was not any--there was just playing. There was no inventiveness, there was no career thinking at that time. If you were playing, you were, as I say--

Lage: Just trying not to peel potatoes.

Newell: Yes, trying not to peel potatoes. [laughter] So no, it was not that--but at the same time, it taught you a lot about--like I learned from Great Lakes, from Tony Hinkle, the coach I mentioned, the style of play. I watched, I played with guys that played in the Middle West that were very, very good offensive players. Because they played a different kind of basketball than we played in the West. We played--

Lage: Well, this is what I was wondering about.

Newell: Yes. Well, that's right.

Lage: So you observed different styles of play that--

Newell: Yes, I learned a lot about technique, I learned about teaching, I learned about breaking down my offense into component drills, I learned about the fast break. They played a lot of fast-break basketball there.

Lage: In the East?

Newell: Yes, in the Middle West, particularly the Middle West.

Lage: And you hadn't been as aware of it just playing on the West Coast?

Newell: No, we didn't play that way out here. It was a different style of ball.

Basketball at Loyola under Coach Jimmy Needles

Lage: Tell me about the ball you played at Loyola, because we've really skipped that part.

Newell: Yes. Well, we had a gypsy existence at Loyola. Every year, we practiced at a different place. Jimmy was a very inventive guy. I'm going to tell you some stories you wouldn't believe.

Lage: Good.

Newell: Jimmy was very inventive. The first year, when I was a freshman, at that time they were trying to sell lots out in Del Rey and houses. There was a real estate outfit that built this model house. They finished the exterior of it, but in the interior, it was just open space. Jimmy is a very inventive guy, and the Jesuits, they don't part with money very easily. So we used to say, "They take the oath of poverty, and you learn to live by it when you work for them."

So anyway, Jimmy talks this guy into letting us put a basket up at each end, and that's where we would practice.

Lage: In this model home!

Newell: Yes, in the inside of this big model home. It was like a barn inside. But it was a short ceiling, low ceiling, and you couldn't arc the ball very well. It killed my shot. My shot was--

Lage: Horizontal.

Newell: Yes, it was diametrically impossible for the thing to drop, because [laughing] if I arced the ball, it hit the ceiling; if I didn't, it hit the front rim. It was a line-drive shot. So anyway, I was shooting at it, but was not a very good shooter.

Implications of the Elimination of the Center Jump

Newell: So I played freshman ball there, and the first year I played there, we still had the center jump.

Lage: That's when it changed?

Newell: Yes, they eliminated the center jump between my freshman and sophomore year [1937], which was the biggest single rule change in the history of the game of basketball. The center jump simply was this: that after every basket, you came back to the middle of the court and had a center jump.

Lage: What a change!

Newell: Oh, yes. Well, you can imagine, once they got rid of it--this was just before the war, though, and it takes about five or six years before a new rule, major rule, really has an impact.

Lage: Before all the implications of it are worked out?

Newell: Yes. Before it is really understood by the coaches. Some of them will understand it more quickly than others, and they'll have success more quickly. Some will fight it for ten years and be out of coaching because they don't win and they wonder why. But when they have a new rule, one of the most important things is to understand that it's in there; it's a new rule, you've got to make the thing work for you and not just bitch and moan about it, because it's not going to change until it's been tried and tested.

But anyway, this was good for me, because I played under the other, and then I saw all the implications of fast break and transition basketball, even. And the deployment of the players. With the center jump, you had your big men, who are now forwards, as guards, and they played--

Lage: The big men were guards?

Newell: The big men were guards, and your small men were forwards. And they kept the same formation of players, the deployment of players, after they eliminated the center jump, so your guards were bringing the ball up; the big guys are bringing the ball up. And it was kind of a slow game. Out here in the West, we were slow anyway because we were more of a defensive-minded part of the country. So we were not very creative or inventive in the offensive end.

Well, this is the way we played at Loyola.

Lage: You still had the big men being--

Newell: Yes, the big men were the guards, and the smaller men were the forwards. I was a defensive player. Jimmy always put me on the scorer of the other team. But when we were on offense, he wanted me to be a passer, not a shooter. I never did quite get over that little arc I had. But I was such a good defensive player, and when we beat SC, they had an All-American forward, and I held him down to six or seven points or something, and that was our biggest win ever, to beat the powerful Trojans who were the best in the conference at the time.

Learning Reverse Action and Defense from Jimmy

Newell: We played what we call reverse action. It was similar to what SC played. We actually executed it a little differently, and that later was the basis of my offense when I became a college coach.

Lage: So even though the game changed a lot after you played, you drew on your experience at Loyola?

Newell: Oh, sure, sure. My offensive concept of reverse action and all, which with Jimmy was the deployment of players and doing certain things, was definitely what I was taught with Jimmy. And I was taught defense from Jimmy. Phil Woolpert, who played right along with me at Loyola, later became a very famous coach. He was my assistant at USF and then when I left USF, he became the head coach. His teams are noted for their great defense. We were very, very well taught. We understood defense, we played real good defense.

Lage: Did Jimmy Needles talk a lot about defense? Was it what he showed you, or what he told you?

Newell: Oh, yes. Jimmy took a kinesiology class one time, and it never left him. He would tell you the muscles that go into taking a step here and taking a step there. He never offensively taught much, but defensively, he really, really taught us how to play on the ball, off the ball, and fundamentally how to slide through screens and fight--he taught us all the real basics of defense. And Phil and I both, when we were coaching, we were both two of the best defensive coaches in the country. Our theories and concepts--well, Bobby Knight [coach at Indiana University] today will tell you that his defensive concepts are right from the Cal team. But they all trace back to what Jimmy taught us.

Jimmy's Inventiveness: Playing BYU on a Condemned Pier

Newell: But I was telling you about the inventiveness of Jimmy. At Loyola, we never had our own court. Every year, we would be a gypsy team. We played sometimes at Loyola High School, which was in L.A., about twenty-five miles from Loyola University. But that was the closest we had to a home court.

So the second year, they condemned [laughs] the Santa Monica pier, and they had big signs: "You're proceeding at your own risk, this is a condemned pier." And it was; they had had a terrible storm, and it had knocked off part of the pier way out. There was a big ballroom on the pier, and as I say, Jimmy was very inventive.

Lage: [laughs] And desperate.

Newell: Yes, and desperate too. So he goes to the fellow that is in charge of the pier, I guess--I don't know who he went to, but he went to somebody--and he talked the guy into letting us use the ballroom, the only thing left standing on this broken pier. And they've got these warning signs all around.

So he talks him into it, and we take one end of the ballroom, and he gets a basketball court made out of that part--the floor was great, and all they had to do was put the baskets up and then paint lines and all. He made some kind of a deal. Jimmy was a liquor salesman. The Jesuits didn't pay him enough money to coach us, but he was a liquor salesman, and I think he gave the guy a case of liquor to do it. But anyway, that's where we played.

Now, the first game of the year, I always had a problem, because I was a defensive player, and Jimmy was a very aggressive guy himself, and he taught aggressive defense. He used to tell me--I'd say, "How do you play this guy, Jimmy?" He'd say, "Well, give him a belt and observe the reaction." What he meant by that, if you gave him a real good shot, and the guy didn't say anything, you had him on your hip the rest of the night. And if he did say something, and he was a big guy, you'd say, "Jeez, I'm sorry, you ran into my elbow." And that was his whole creed.

So we get out there, and it's our first game of the year, but it's the second year. The first year, we didn't have very good uniforms. They were leftover from the previous coach's team, and they were about five years out of date. But we played in them. So he got us these real beautiful silk uniforms the next year, and none of us had ever had uniforms like that. But they hadn't arrived yet.

So we were playing Brigham Young University, and Brigham Young always had blue and white silk uniforms. I remember when they came out, and we looked at them, we just quit shooting to look at those beautiful uniforms. And here we are, we don't have uniforms. So Jimmy gives us grey trunks, with tank tops, red tank tops, with the grey shorts, those were our school colors. [telephone interruption]

Jimmy, as I said, was a very enterprising man. So he, on these tank tops, he took tape and he made us Roman numeral numbers. Because I had a penchant for getting fouls early and often, he made me number VIII.

Lage: I don't get the connection.

Newell: Well, you will. He didn't have anybody VII, VI, or V. He had me, VIII, and he had IV's and III's, and he had IX's and X's and on up. Because he knew I got fouls. Well, I didn't know it at the time, so I get three quick fouls, as will sometimes happen. He takes me out, but he peels off some tape, and I suddenly become number VII.

Lage: [laughing] Oh, no!

Newell: So to make a long story short, I ended up with three fouls as number VIII, three fouls with number VII, and two at number VI.

Lage: And nobody caught on?

Newell: Well, the other coach finally, late in the game, he goes up, he says, "That guy out there--" because I was guarding his best guy. It seemed like I was getting a lot of fouls, but I was still guarding his best guy, which was true. And Jimmy would just take me out just long enough to peel another piece of tape off. [laughter] The other coach never asked my name before, when I was number VIII; he didn't ask it until I was number VI. He says, "Who's number VI?" And Jimmy gave him my name. "How many fouls does he have?" "He's only got two."

"What do you mean, he's only got two? I've seen him foul and foul." "No, there it is: Number VI, two." Well, he never asked about number VII or number VIII, who they were. And then I didn't get any more fouls. It was near the end of the game. But it was really funny.

It was a real stormy night, and the pier was shaking like crazy. Well, we were used to it, because we practiced there. Every time a big wave would hit it, it would just shudder. All the Brigham Young guys were about, in those days, six-five, six-four, and all blond and pretty, in their blue uniforms and all that, and we were kind of scrubby and all. The court was

like this [gestures], and the benches were here, and this was the end. The main dance floor and the bandstand were way up at the other end. We were just over at one end. There was an exit sign here.

This is rather early in the game: one of their players turned an ankle or something like that, and it was time out. I was guarding the star BYU guy. I was just kind of talking to him, because we were waiting around. In those days, you didn't go in a huddle; you just kind of waited out on the court. So I said, "What do you think of our court?" He said, "Well, it's kind of scary. It's all right."

I said, "Let me show you what happened here last week." So I go over and I open up this exit, and there's the ocean right there with all the water. He looked, and just--he was pale to begin with. He was a light-skinned guy. They all look like they come from Sweden. He looked down there, and I closed the door and put the board that held it shut back on. I said, "We had a guy last game we played, and he was driving baseline and his feet went out from under him. I just saved him before he went in the ocean." [laughter] Well, it didn't happen, but I--.

Lage: This was your means of intimidation.

Newell: Yes. So yes, I didn't have to worry about him going in that direction, so I played him over on this side, and I did a real good job. Jimmy commended me, and I told him, "I just took a leaf out of your book." I didn't tell him what I did. "I just took a leaf out of your book." He didn't know what I meant, but the leaf was that you figured out some way to do it. And so as I say, I never worried about him going that way. And he didn't have a very good night.

I still got the fouls. I was getting the fouls other ways.

Lage: Why did you get the fouls, because you were so aggressive?

Newell: Yes. Because that's what I was supposed to do--deny the guy the ball when he got it, physically play him. That's what Jimmy always wanted us to do. As I say, give him a rap, and if he comes back and says, "Excuse me;" if he doesn't, you know he's not going to be tough the rest of the night. So we played--we ended up beating them. We shouldn't have been on the same court with them, but all they wanted to do was get the game over with and get off that bloody pier. We won a lot of games there we shouldn't have won.

Lage: Sometimes these bad courts have advantages.

Newell: Oh, that had a tremendous advantage. And we made sure when we went out there that all the signs were visible--"Condemned," "Enter at your own risk." By the time the team got on the court, most of the time, they were beaten already, because all they could think of was--especially when it was shaking. And we're used to it. We soon knew that the other team was intimidated by it, and we always let them know. [laughter]

In fact, I told one guy--I didn't like the guy, the way the guy was playing. This was another game. I told him, I said, "Listen, if this thing starts to go, run for that door right over there." That was the one that took you out to the ocean! [laughing]

Lage: Sounds like you had some good times.

Newell: We did. It was a do-it-yourself kind of a thing.

Lage: Was Needles--this is a good story about his changing your number, but it borders on, could we say, cheating. Was this his way of operating?

Newell: Oh, yes. No, that was Jimmy. Anything Jimmy did was right; that's the way we thought. There was an ingenuity to him.

Another Jimmy Needles story was, he's coaching this team during the war in the San Francisco League up there, and it was a service league--army, navy, coast guard, and all that. The team he's got is a terrible team. They can't win a game. So he's got about three days before the last game of the season, and he gets the bright idea. He practices a game where you could shoot at either basket. In other words, you'd dribble down towards that basket, and turn around and dribble back and make a basket here. Well, there's a lot of adjustment to a game like that. You just don't start playing that.

So he practiced it, and they get pretty good at it, he thought. So the day before the game, he calls the other coach and says, "Let's try--" he's already practiced it for two days. "Let's try this game; the season's over, and neither one of us is going anywhere. Let's just experiment with it." And the other coach, "Yeah, that's a good idea. I'll give a little practice today, and we'll do it." Next day they've got to play the game. So Jimmy got three days of practice, this guy got one day. Jimmy's guys still got beat--[laughing] Jimmy says, "I realized I had a bad team when the guys still beat me about thirty points." [laughter]

But anyway, that was the ingenuity of Jimmy. But anything Jimmy did we thought was right. He was our coach, and it was--Loyola was, as I say--[laughs] We didn't travel in high style.

Lage: It sounds like the school itself didn't support basketball that much.

Newell: Well, it just started. They played it, and then they had a cessation of play, and then they restarted it.

The Early Offense and the Simplicity of the Game

Lage: So he was just starting up the program?

Newell: Yes. But Jimmy was a great guy. He really understood. He had a great intuitive knowledge. He was talking about the basketball that is played today fifty years ago, to me, anyway. He and I used to argue--it wasn't really an argument--

Lage: Was this while you were at school, or later?

Newell: No, when I was in school, when I was playing. "Why do we do this? Why don't you do that?" And he loved to talk basketball. He got me really in far beyond the playing of the game, without my knowing it, but telling me why this, why that, why this, why that. Phil and I often talked about it. When I was coaching, I'd get in a situation, and I'd come up with something, and it would be an answer to what the problem was, and it would really be a satisfying answer to what was happening. I'd say, "How did I ever think of that? Where did that ever come from? I don't even remember that." This would be after the game. And sure enough, in the dark recesses of your mind, it would have been something that he had been expounding to me years and years and years before.

Jimmy saw way ahead of his time. There's a part of basketball now which is a transition game of basketball. Well, even back then Jimmy couldn't believe that you couldn't go a full ninety-four feet with your offense. In other words, he recognized then what we call now the early offense, which is something that probably came into the game in a popular way probably maybe fifteen years ago on a few teams, but maybe in the last ten years it's been a big part of offensive basketball. They have different names for it, but early offense is what it's most commonly known as. When you get the ball, even though you're not fast breaking, you are in transition; there are screens and there's movement, so in a sense you're playing ninety-four feet.

Lage: You're already setting up--

Newell: Yes. You don't have to wait for your center. Your offense can start in the back court. It was common then for teams to only start their offense when they went over the midcourt line into the forecourt. Jimmy saw beyond that into the game that is now played--the transition game that precedes a team's set offense. This was something that he would expound upon, and diagram for me, and tell me that it's going to be a part of basketball.

Lage: And they had just eliminated the center jump, so it seems he was really looking for the new possibilities of that change.

Newell: Yes, and he could see--he was a very visionary guy, very creative. He taught us to be creative.

Another thing he taught me was the simplicity of the game, and it's something I try to teach coaches, that basketball is really a simple game. It gets confused and complicated by coaches.

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Newell: When I lecture, a central theme for me is that coaches come from one of two schools of thought. One is that it's a game of either simplicity and execution, or a game of surprise and change. Simplicity and execution is the teaching of the game, and recognizing that it's a game of counters, that what you try to do is you try to counter whatever the other team is doing and anticipate how they have to counter you. [telephone interruption]

Lage: Are the surprise-and-change game and the simplicity-and-execution game mutually exclusive?

Newell: Well, simplicity and execution, yes. What you try to do is to simplify situations by reading what the defense is doing, and then reacting. Not presupposing.

Lage: Read and react.

Newell: Read and react. And not presuppose what the defense will or won't do. You read the defense, you don't presuppose it. It's very, very important, and I always taught this, and because of this our teams didn't throw the ball away, because they didn't anticipate the defense being here or there; they read it where it was, and they knew what the counter was. This is the simplicity of it: the defense is trying to take something away from you, the way they're playing, and whatever it is they're taking away, they're also giving you something. If they're playing you that side, they're giving you

this side; if they're playing behind you, they allow you to get the ball in; if they play you in front, you're going to get the ball over the top.

And you do this through drills, through the part-method of teaching, where you break it down, and you--. I was just in Japan, I was trying to--they don't understand this part of it. They only see the receiver; they never seem to see the defense.

Lage: They don't see the whole range of it?

Newell: No, they don't even have to see the whole range. They just have read the defense where they're throwing that ball: if the defense is here, you throw it there. But if the offensive man is there, you just don't throw the ball to him. But in Japan--in a lot of places, not just Japan, but in this country and in a lot of places, players just throw the ball to the receiver and don't read the defense. So I stress read and react--if you've got the ball, and the man is playing you, you read his defense and you react.

The first thing I do with the professionals at the Big Man Camp, is to have them, when they get the ball, to just look at the basket. Because so many players at all levels make up their mind what they're going to do before they get the ball. Sometimes they make up their mind they're going to drive, and the defensive man is well off him, and they have him in an easy, open shot. Sometimes they decide they're going to shoot when they get it, and the man is tight, and knocks it in his face.

So I have a drill there where when they get the ball, I tell the defense I want them to play tight or loose, or over here, over here. When you get the ball, you've got to read the defense and react. If it's there, you go over here.

Lage: Just against one person, or--?

Newell: One on one, yes. Just to teach them, when they get the ball, first look at the basket. Because if I look at the basket, I can read everything. I can read where you are, if you're on this side, this side, or if you're loose, and if you're tight, we work you here.

Lage: Did Needles have this kind of approach?

Newell: Part of it. Part of it I learned at Great Lakes. Some of the part method, two-man stuff and that, some of the post play. But a lot of it was spacing and balance and things like that, I learned from Jimmy.

Pete's Curiosity about the Game

Lage: Did Jimmy Needles kind of take you on as a mentor would, or was the whole team--?

Newell: No, I guess he recognized in me that I had the curiosity to be a coach. I had a curiosity about the game that kind of intrigued him.

Lage: Something he probably didn't see in a lot of players.

Newell: Well, a lot of players, yes, and they may have been better players, but it was because maybe they were better physically or they played more. I played so much baseball; they were playing basketball all the time, and I was playing baseball most of the time that they were playing basketball. So their development was better, individually. But I was more into understanding the game; the game intrigued me. And I would challenge him--not challenge, not "You don't know what you're talking about," but, "Why?" And he loved that, he loved to have me ask him, because he loved to expound on the game, and I loved to listen to him.

And Phil was like I was, Phil Woolpert. The two of us together--we didn't know it at the time, I had no thought I was going to be a coach, but some of the players, they didn't come from that direction. For them basketball was something fun to be played, and to me, evidently it was beyond that. It's a game.

III THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO--FROM NOVICE COACH TO NIT CHAMPIONSHIP, 1946-1950

A Young Team and a Novice Coach

Newell: I've said this before, that the first game I coached as head coach, I thought I knew everything, and the last game I coached, I realized how much I didn't know. And that was true. When I think back to the opening days of my career at USF, and how little I knew, and how probably poorly prepared I was to coach college. . . I'd been in the navy for four years, and I had come right out and started coaching at the college level. At Saint Johns, I wasn't even coaching the top team. I was coaching the seventh and eight graders.

Lage: That's a big jump, from seventh and eighth grade to college.

Newell: Yes, and I didn't even coach the ninth graders. But my seventh and eighth team could beat the ninth graders. We did, we could beat the ninth graders. They were bigger and they were older and all that, but we beat them.

My first two games that I coached at USF were against USC and UCLA in L.A. here. Sam Barry, who as I say was such a help to me--

Lage: And he was still coaching?

Newell: Yes, he was at SC. He was the basketball coach at SC. It was before Wooden came to UCLA. Wilbur Johns was the UCLA coach. I'll never forget, the first game was against SC. UCLA had, I think, twenty-one lettermen returning from the service, and SC had about the same. I had a freshman team, I had a young team. I had a real young team. Maybe I had some kids who had been in the service for a year, were nineteen years old, mostly freshman. But they had players three or four or five years older than

mine. They had so many players that that was their big problem, they couldn't all play.

Lage: Yes, there are not that many positions.

Newell: Oh, it was tough.

Lage: So they had several years of players coming back from the war at the same time?

Newell: Well, yes, they had four classes of players. Some of them had been All-Coast before they went in the service. There were a number of those, I don't know how many of them.

Lage: That must have been a strange--

Newell: Oh, it was strange. We didn't have that problem at USF; we didn't have that many guys returning. So most of my players were freshmen, right out of high school. A couple of them had been in the service. My captain had been, although he was at USF during the war in a program there, and Jimmy Needles invited him back to play basketball.

Lage: Now, how did you get hired at USF?

Newell: Well, Jimmy again. Jimmy was the business manager of the university there, and I had kept in touch with him, not really dreaming that I would ever coach there. Then I got out of the service, and they hired Clipper Smith, who was a very famous football coach at that time, to coach the football team. So they needed a basketball coach, because I think they had a wartime coach, I forget.

It was a wonderful time, because everything was new, and we were all out of the service, and the war was over, and it was a very joyous time, as I remember it, for players and me as a coach, a young coach. As I say, I knew so little, I didn't know what I didn't know. I guess that's what they call blissful ignorance.

Lage: So those first games with--?

Newell: Well, the first game I'll never forget. I'm playing USC, and they've got a great team. They had, I believe three all-Americans on the team. Two of their players became outstanding coaches and basketball minds, Tex Winter and Alex Hannum. Sam Barry was the coach.

Lage: A seasoned coach.

Newell: Yes. [laughs] I remember it, my offense was about as archaic as you could have an offense, which was just what I knew. I'm sitting on the bench, and I'm saying to myself, "God, I hope we score." I'm not just thinking of that game, I'm thinking of the season. That's how--. You know, you're coaching, you don't realize unless you've coached, the dark thoughts that you can have. There's such a paradox, such a contradiction, in coaching, where you have to speak positively how you're going to win a game, and yet again in these recesses of your mind, you know how many mistakes you're capable of, how you can lose a game.

Pressure, Tension, and Pete's Famous Towel

Newell: That is probably one of the things that drove me out of coaching--not the thing, but it was one of the things that I always had found harder and harder to come to grips with. Before the game--I was smoking those days, and not eating, and drinking too much coffee, and the doctor was telling me I'm going to have to change, and I'd try to, and I can't, I can't change. The tension. I only got one technical all the time I ever coached. I told the guy, I said, "If you could see as well as you hear, you might be a good official." [laughter] The guy called a technical on me, he was sixty feet away from me, and I didn't even swear at him. But I did make an opinion, a loud opinion, of his officiating. But he was so far away, I didn't think he could possibly hear me. But he didn't see very well.

Lage: You were talking about why you left coaching, because it got harder and harder to--

Newell: Yes. Before the game, gee, it got to the point where I would just barely make the tip-off. Earlier, I would get out there, smoke a cigarette and get out there about fifteen minutes before the game, and then it got to be ten minutes, then eight minutes, then six minutes, three minutes, and--

Lage: Because of this kind of a sense of dread?

Newell: It's kind of an examination of conscience, when you're in that dressing room. At Cal, I'd pace and pace, and nobody--they'd all get out of there, because they'd know I'm thinking of the game, and my mind is going a thousand miles an hour, "What did I forget to tell them?" And all the things, and you're walking, and I don't know, it just--. It just seemed that your stomach would be going around, and all the pressure and tension.

And yet, when I'd get out there, I was not--I very seldom stood up. The only time I would ever stand up really is when a player would come off the court and I'd just give him a pat or something. That's the only time I'd ever stand up. But I had a towel, and I would use the towel; it was almost like a savior for me, because everything I would think of and say, I could say in that towel, and nobody would hear it.

Lage: So that is what your towel was for.

Newell: Yes. And of course, my throat would get dry, and the towel would always be wet, and I could chew on it a little and get some moisture. But I used it a lot when I had a bad call, rather than yelling at the official, I'd yell at the towel, through the towel. It would muffle it so nobody could hear it but me. But it was a crutch, it was really a crutch.

Lage: Did you develop that at San Francisco?

Newell: Yes. When I first started coaching, my hands would get very wet, very moist. I'd get a dry towel and wipe them off. Then I found my throat would get dry, so then I'd have a wet end on it.

Lage: It's almost like a security blanket.

Newell: It was a security blanket, it really was. And at a time-out, I was more interested in where the damn towel was than where the players were. But it was, it was a security blanket. But as I say, as the time went on, I found it more difficult and more difficult to get out on the court.

Lage: Is this why--Ned Averbuck told me that you'd never walked out with the team.

Newell: Never walked out with the team, no.

Lage: And he thought it was some kind of a superstition you had.

Newell: No, it wasn't that. It was the cigarette to begin with. I'd want to smoke that last cigarette. Actually, when I first started coaching college, the coaches smoked on the bench. I hate to say it, but I was one of them. I'd seen another coach smoke, and I figured, well, it's all right. Then finally it got to the point where nobody would smoke. I don't think anybody ever made a rule that you couldn't, but it just became a no-no.

Lage: So you'd have that last smoke after they went out?

Newell: Yes, that cigarette was a real, real important part, I thought, of calming me down and all that. But when I'd get on the bench, once the game would start, then everything was fine. Time-outs, I never felt the pressure or panic. I was fortunate in coaching, I never had the fear of losing my job or anything like that. Not that I felt that I couldn't get fired, but I never thought of it that way.

A Coach's Life in the Postwar Years

Newell: A writer asked me about differences now and then--that was just about two days ago--we got to talking and we got onto this subject. I told him, "Well, coaches in my time never looked at the job from a money standpoint. We always felt that we could make as much money out of not coaching as we did in coaching, because we didn't make that much." In fact, the most I ever made at Cal was $12,500. When I was at Michigan State, I was the highest-paid coach in the league, because I had a president there that really liked the way I coached and liked the kind of players I recruited, and liked the program. He wanted to keep me, and I was there four years. I loved the place. I didn't like the weather or the climate at all, but the people and all that I really did.

When I had this chance to come back to Cal, I went from $12,000 to $8,000. I took a $4,000 cut, and in those days--

Lage: That's a lot of money.

Newell: And at that time, I had three kids. But it was worth it to me. Again, I didn't judge it, and I also was an assistant baseball coach at Cal, whereas all I did was coach basketball and teach a class, a theory class, at Michigan State. I didn't have to coach baseball at Cal, I don't believe, but Brutus Hamilton asked me if I would be the assistant baseball coach. We won the NCAA one year I was with the baseball team. In fact, three of the star players were my basketball players. And one of them, George Sterling, pitched a one-to-nothing final game to win the NCAA championship; he hit a home run and pitched a one-to-nothing game.

Lage: And he was a basketball player, too?

Newell: He was one of my basketballers, sure.

Lage: Three of the players--Earl Robinson--?

Newell: Earl Robinson, and George Sterling, and Bernie Simpson.

Lage: Was that common, at that time, that players played two sports?

Newell: Fairly common. Not real, real common, but fairly common. Basketball and baseball kind of coincided all right.

Coaching Basketball, Baseball, Tennis and Golf at USF for $3200 a Year

Newell: Well, I was telling you, at USF way back when I went there, I made, believe it or not, $3,200. That was my salary. But again, it was a hell of a lot more than I was making in the navy, so I thought, "I'm doing pretty good." And you know, you managed to get by. How we ever did, now I can't understand. So it had to be Florence that was able to do it. You didn't have money for a lot of things, but you didn't come from that direction at that time. You were just happy to have the opportunity to coach at this high level of competition.

I was head baseball coach at USF and head basketball coach. Also the golf coach and tennis coach.

Lage: You were the golf coach and the tennis coach?

Newell: Yes. Well, there were only two of us in the athletic department, and the football coach was only going to coach football. He's not going to be doing anything else. We had a very, very fine soccer coach, but that had been an historic sport for many years at USF, and still is. But these other sports were kind of intramural in approach though they had played competition in the area. So the golf coach--I was the golf coach, but I appointed John Benington, my basketball player, who was a very good golfer, to be the golf captain, and I'd give him three extra balls for being the golf captain. And of course, he was very happy to get them. He hit the ball straight. Three balls doesn't last me too long, but for him, they'd last him months.

Lage: And he might have done a better job coaching, who knows?

Newell: Well, he was. Actually, I never went out with him, I'd just say, "John, we're playing so-and-so today. Here's your three balls; go out and beat them." And that was my coaching. I never even saw the team play.

Now, the tennis was something else. I'm the tennis coach. Jimmy and I recruited--Jimmy basically recruited the best tennis team in the

country. We beat USC 9-0, we beat UCLA 9-0, we whacked everybody, and then we went back and won the NCAA in 1947.

But what happened was, there was a Mr. Kennard--he was an in-training Jesuit, what they call a scholastic. He's a Jesuit now, but he was a scholastic then going through the process to become a Jesuit. It takes about sixteen years to become a Jesuit. He had some menial job. He was a nice guy. So I got to know him a little, and I said, "I'm going to make you my assistant in tennis."

So he was my assistant. I'd make the tennis schedule, and that was it. I'd go out and see him; I'd see them play once or twice. So as a matter of record, I was an assistant on an NCAA baseball champion, I was a coach, in name, of an NCAA tennis champion, and then my Cal team won the NCAA basketball. So that's pretty good parlay. But I can't claim much credit for the tennis, except that we recruited the guys. We really did, we had a powerhouse for a couple of years there.

Lage: Was there a tradition in tennis at USF that you were able to build on?

Newell: No. Well, they had for about four years, five years, they had a great tennis team, yes. But for a couple of years, it was the best in the country. As I say, when you beat SC and UCLA... We also beat Cal, but USC and UCLA, USC especially in those days was the powerhouse in tennis. We'd go down there, and we'd beat their best player. Our best player was better than their best player, and they were both real good ranking players. We went 9-0.

Lage: That's amazing, and are you crediting Mr. Kennard?

Newell: Well, he didn't know anything about it either. No, it was recruiting.

Lage: It was just recruiting?

Newell: No, he didn't know how many guys were on each side of the net. But he got out of all those chore duties, peeling potatoes and all that stuff. That's what you had to do when you were a scholastic. I got him out of the kitchen, and he loved it. He'd take care of arranging the travel, the tickets, and all that, for going on trips when the team would make a trip.

But as soon as basketball was over I was right into baseball. A lot of times, I would practice basketball from one to three and then my baseball would start three to five. I'd go right from one sport to the other. But heck, you were--it was so close to those lonely days out in the middle of the Pacific, some island out there in the Philippines, that every time you felt put

upon, you'd think, "Well, jeez, remember where I was about six months ago, a year ago?"

Lage: That's right. It affects the whole society, that kind of experience. You know, we haven't talked about a tour in the Pacific. We left you at Moffett base leading the life of Reilly. Did you go on to a ship in the Pacific at some point?

Newell: I was on an A.P.A., the Grafton. It was an Auxiliary Personnel Attack ship that carried marines and sometimes air force for landings in various sites in the Pacific--Peleliu, the Philippines, Okinawa.

Postwar Housing in San Francisco

Newell: So as I say, gosh, it was a wonderful time in San Francisco, because the war was over, and people were home, and--

Lage: Did you live in the city?

Newell: Yes [laughs]. The first place we got there was an apartment on McAllister, right next door to one of those theaters where the strippers were. I remember one morning, we were up on the third floor, and young Pete was playing with his cars on the window sill. The window was up like this, a foot high. He was playing with his cars out there, and they all fell down one Sunday morning. So I had to go get them. He's crying, and I've got to go get them.

So I put on a t-shirt, and I don't know, a pair of pants, and I have to climb the fence to get them. It's right next to a burlesque show. I'll never forget, because after I get the cars and I'm coming back, I'm climbing the fence, and a bus stops filled with people, and here's this guy who looks like he's been up all night, you know, climbing a fence; it was the same fence that you went back to the back of the stripper joint. What in the hell is going on in their eyes? They're all looking at me like I'm some pervert or something.

Lage: Wait till ABC gets hold of that!

Newell: That's right. It was a very famous San Franciscan who got me that place, Vince Hallinan. Vince was a very good friend of the athletic director at the school, who was a good friend of mine, and he introduced me to Vince. Vince Hallinan was one of the most brilliant defense lawyers San Francisco

ever produced. Vince and his wife owned that apartment house. They owned a few others. They let me in there at a bargain price, I remember that. You couldn't get a place in San Francisco then. In those days, you could name your price.

Lage: Everybody was coming to San Francisco--

Newell: Everybody was coming, and there was just no room. Then we moved from there, got a bigger place, because it wasn't really a very good place for Florence. We moved from there to Haight Street, a big old place on Haight Street. Jimmy got that one for me; he found out about it, and it was big. Then we had enough room for Pete. In fact, Phil Woolpert and his wife stayed with us there when he went up north to take a job that didn't work out.

Competing with Hank Luisetti for the USF Job

Newell: When I got out of the service, they gave you I think $300. Florence, who was always great at picking clothes--every time I'd pick anything, it looked great when I'd look at it; at least I'd think it would. I'd get home, and it was terrible. It would really be bad, bad color, bad whatever. "How did you ever pick that out?" I said, "I really don't know."

So anyway, she took that $300, and believe me, that was all the money we really had. When I got out of the service, I had to go to the naval hospital at Long Beach for an operation. I had to have an operation on my chest, on a problem I had on board the ship. I got hit in the chest, and I got a little cyst.

So anyway, when I got out, I didn't have a job. So I was working parking cars at the Santa Anita race track; the Savoy people gave me the job.

Lou Weichman, who was the father of a kid that played football with me, got me a job. It was good, too, because it paid pretty good. Now, we lived with my mother for a while, while getting settled. Anyway, I had this interview at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. with the athletic director and head football coach, Clipper Smith.

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Lage: You said while we were changing the tape that the fellow who interviewed you thought you were too young. How old were you when you started at USF?

Newell: Let's see, that was '47--no, '46. I was thirty when I went there, and I didn't become thirty-one until late in the summer.

Lage: So you were pretty young.

Newell: Yes. For that time, yes. Clipper Smith thought I was too young, and of course, Jimmy convinced him that I wasn't. I think Jimmy blew me up a lot better than I should have been blown up. So then I got the job. I wasn't a popular choice for the job, because the alumni wanted Hank Luisetti, who was the former Stanford star. He coached an AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] team. He was a marquee person. They didn't know me from a load of hay.

Lage: Was he interested in the job?

Newell: I don't know if Hank was. He never publicly expressed an interest in it. But my price was right: they got a coach that coached all these sports for them for $3,200; hell, they couldn't afford to pass that up.

Lage: They probably couldn't have paid Hank Luisetti that.

Newell: Yes, and I think that if Hank was interested, he wasn't as soon as he heard what they paid. Anyway, that's how I was hired. And Jimmy was steering the thing the whole way. Later I had asked Jimmy if he would help get Phil Woolpert the high school job in San Francisco. Between what little help I could give--I had been there a while, not long, but I got to know some of the priests, and I put a word in for him to hire Phil as my assistant. Phil was paid only $2,600, I think, at the high school, so I got him $200 or $300 as my assistant. He made about as much as I did, but he was coaching my freshman team. I guess we called it the reserve team that year, because freshmen were eligible for varsity.

And Phil stayed with me for all the time I coached there, as my freshman coach, and then, when I left USF, I had to talk him into taking the head-coaching job. He didn't want to take it because he didn't want to deal with the alumni and did not want the alumni involved. He never was that caught up on the notoriety and the acclaim and all that stuff that he got a great deal of when he won. He won two NCAA championships in a row at USF.

Lage: Yes. And I bet he got a lot of excited alumni then.

Newell: Oh, yes. But he still didn't like it. Phil was a very unique guy and a wonderful guy. In fact, he left college athletics to go up and drive a bus and build a home in the wilderness of Washington, I believe.

Parking Lot Lesson from Sam Barry

Lage: Pete, we got diverted from the USF basketball story about thirty minutes back. We talked earlier about your initial games against USC and UCLA where you were sitting on the bench wondering if your team would ever score. Now, how did you get from there to a really successful program?

Newell: Oh, that's funny. We started off at SC and we played these two big powers, both of them with all these veteran players back. The first game, we got beaten maybe thirteen points, fifteen points. Could have been beaten a lot more, but Sam took it easy on us. I'll never forget, Sam ran a double screen, and it was great--he must have made six, seven baskets with that. And because we ran a similar kind of offense, my mind was going, How can I run that?

Well, after the game--his wife was named Ruth, a wonderful lady. And because I'd worked for him over in Catalina, I got to know her real well. She was an Irish lady, just a lovely lady.

So after the game, we came out. Sam happened to be out there standing with Ruth, his wife. As they started to go I said, "Hey, Sam." I really hadn't had a chance to talk with him other than just at the end of the game, shaking hands. "God, that's a great double screen you ran on me. How do you run that thing?" "Well, let me show you, Pete."

So we get Florence--honest to goodness, in the parking lot--he's got his wife and my wife and a car, and I don't know, something else, and he's setting it up for me, and all four of us are involved in this thing. We're using the car as the fifth player. Anyway, it was the funniest thing in the world. Here we are, our wives, we got them involved in the thing, and I learned a double screen that was a trademark of all my future teams. I learned it in a parking lot with the help of two coaches' wives and an opposing coach. The following week, we had to go up to Utah and play the two Utah teams. But before that, the next night, we played UCLA, and we gave them a real good game. They only beat us 48-44. We conceivably could have won that game; we played really good.

Lage: How did you manage that?

Newell: Well, we just got over the stage fright of the first game.

Lage: Yes, but you described UCLA with twenty-one lettermen returning, and you with--

Newell: Yes, see, that was their problem. They weren't a lot of happy campers.

Lage: They can't play all twenty-one at once, I guess. So you gave UCLA a close game.

Newell: Yes, a close game. And that really gave us a lot of confidence.

Defeating the Defending Champions, University of Utah

Newell: Now, the next game we're playing is in Utah against University of Utah, who had just won the NCAA championship the year before. They had their players back, and they had this great team. They were still the greatest team Utah ever had. Now, we're going in to Utah--third game in a row on the road--and really we had basically a freshman team. They were all freshmen I had on the team, and with more braggadocio than brains. We played a tremendous game; we beat them. It was the biggest upset of the year. And they were ranked much higher than SC or UCLA. It was really a blow to them, because it was their first game, I think.

Lage: And they were returning their stars?

Newell: They had all these players, these great players. And the funny thing about it was, that year they went to the championships again, and I think they won the NIT. Maybe they didn't win the NIT, but anyway, one year they won the NIT and one year they won the NCAA.

The next year our players were now sophomores and we were a better team, but we weren't really championship caliber, and we beat them again. It was really something. We beat them the same way, the same kind of game.

Lage: What approach did you take? Were you learning fast?

Newell: Well, it was our defense. Our defense was getting better and better and better, and we could depend on it more, and as a result, there was consistency. We were starting to get a consistency in play.

Lage: And were you using your drills and the kinds of things you became known for?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure.

Lage: So you had already worked up your system?

Newell: Yes. I didn't have as much offensive flexibility as I acquired later, but what we did, we did well. We didn't do a lot. We didn't make many mistakes. But I was learning, too. I was a student of the game. I studied other teams, what they did, and I tried to incorporate something I liked that they did.

Lage: How did you learn about other teams? You didn't have all the films of the games then, did you?

Newell: No, but I'd watch them play, or play against them. No, you didn't have many films. Only in my last year at USF, I think, I had about three or four films. At Michigan State, I had a good budget for that, we had films of every game.

"Stick with Me; I'll Get You to the Garden"

Newell: But we were growing together, too. It was a funny thing that I used to kind of kid the team about, you know. Madison Square Garden was the Mecca of basketball; it was the palace of basketball. If you've played the Garden, you've played the palace. So I used to tell the players, "Just stick with me, I'll get you to the Garden." And I had a bunch of San Francisco kids on the team.

I had this one kid, Jack Hanley, whose father was a waterfront cop. Jack was kind of an enforcer; he was very, very physical--he played basketball a lot like I did. As I say, he couldn't hit water if he fell out of a boat. [laughter] But defensively, he was really good.

But what happened when he was in the navy, he was only eighteen years old, and they got him bombed one night, and they took him into a tattoo parlor. He had two battleships tattooed on his upper legs. He looked like Halsey's Fifth Fleet. It looked like the navy was coming right at you when he was dribbling the ball down. Really, they were that big [gestures to indicate the tattoos covered his thighs]. He didn't have a destroyer, he had battleships. He was an avenue boy; he was from the avenues [in the Sunset district of San Francisco].

So the second year, we started to get confidence, and then I'd say, "You stick with me, you get to the Garden." At the end of the year, they gave me a briefcase--I was always carrying a briefcase. I felt that that's what coaches did, so I carried a briefcase. They inscribed, "Stick with us, Pete, and we'll get you to the Garden." [laughter] I think I still have that briefcase around here somewhere.

So the next year, I got this kid from Oakland; he went to American River J.C. [Junior College] in Sacramento, a kid by the name of Don Lofgran, who was a real talent but a very undisciplined, wild kind of a kid. Not a bad kid, but a wild kid, in the sense that he kind of ran the streets.

Lage: You mean in his personal life, or on the court?

Newell: In his personal life. Well, his parents were a lot older than normally parents would be, and there was not a real closeness--I don't blame them, as they were in their sixties and he was about eighteen, that kind of a thing. There was not really any kind of a relationship of understanding. I guess being as old as they were, at that time, sixties were a lot older than it is now. So they just didn't corral him. He had a brother that was very well educated and very successful, and a sister that was very successful, but he was the younger one, born a lot later.

Lage: Did you recruit him from the J.C.?

Newell: Yes, from the J.C. But he was a real talent, a real talent. So he came to USF my third year there.

Lage: Would this have been '49 already?

Newell: This is the '48-'49 season, yes. What happened was, at the national meeting of coaches the year before, at the end of the '47-'48 season, the meetings were in New York, and USF let me go. The Madison Square Garden head man was a fellow by the name of Ned Irish. He was a very famous guy in those days, and long after, in college and professional basketball. He ran the Knicks for years. His assistant was John Goldner, who became a great friend later, and still is.

While we were back there, somebody backed out, they couldn't fulfill this date, because of some schedule problem. And somehow, Sam Barry heard about it. The Stanford coach was Everett Dean, who was a wonderful guy, and another help. Sam got Everett to speak up also, and both of them went to see John Goldner and told him, "This is a young coach, and he's got a real good team coming up." That was before I even had Lofgren. "You

ought to invite him here from San Francisco." San Francisco was a big name in New York anyway.

So they convinced him to let me fill in, and that's how we got to the Garden. When we got to the Garden--you've got to realize, we had done nothing, and they didn't even know much about even the teams we'd played.

Lage: But you did have some good games, beating Utah twice--

Newell: Oh, yes, the fact we beat Utah twice was a real big, significant thing, because that hit New York, because they'd won the championship in New York. That's where the NCAA was then. We'd won other games, too. We beat Cal New Year's Eve when they had many great players. I think in '46-'47, I think that was another big game we won. We got beat a lot, too, but we were about even for that first year. Then the second year we were maybe 14 and 8, 14 and 7, something like that.

So anyway, we got this invitation. Now I've got Lofgran, and now my players are really starting to put it together. So we get invited, and we have to play a Friday night game against La Salle [College] in Philadelphia, Saturday night in New York against CCNY [City College of New York], and then Monday night playing Bradley [University] in Peoria [Illinois].

Lage: Well, that's quite a schedule.

Newell: Yes. La Salle was undefeated; CCNY was undefeated, and that was Nat Holman's team; and then Bradley was undefeated. All three were undefeated. Now, you've got to realize, we'd never been back there. I'd never even been in the Garden. We're just excited as can be, all of us. So La Salle was really a good team. That year, they went 24 and 3 or something like that; that's how good a team they were. They had a guy that was an All-American center, Larry Faust, that later played many years in the NBA. We played a good game, we beat them. We beat them about maybe five, six, seven points, which is a pretty good margin.

We get to New York, we take a train after the game. We play the second game of this double header, so we take about an eleven-thirty train. As I recall, we get into New York about one-thirty. I'm so exhilarated, there's no way I'm going to sleep, because it's only ten-thirty out in the West. We're at the Paramount Hotel, which is right near--it's down on 48th Street, 48th and 8th, or between 8th and Broadway. We're all on a cloud, and I even told the players--they were walking around a while, just to get--and it's one-thirty, quarter to two. Here I've got my team walking around at

two o'clock in the morning, but it seemed like the right thing to do, and it was good.

And then they walked, and in fact, they walked down to the Garden, just to take a look at it, some of them, even though it was dark. In those days, you could walk the streets of New York without worrying about somebody hitting you in the head.

So now we, I guess, get to sleep about three. You didn't have shootarounds in those days, but anyway, we get up and we go gawking around New York. That's the only day we're going to be there, because we have to leave the next morning for Peoria, but really what we wanted to see was the Garden. That was our main thing, and we were just not too far from Broadway, and the kids--. And I just told them around four o'clock, "Get off your feet, and I'll--."

In those days, you had to worry about the gamblers, really. They were shaving games, and there was a lot of money bet. There's a lot of money bet now, but in those days, betting on athletic events was really taboo. But they did it, and New York was where it was most prominent.

Lage: Were you worried about your players being approached?

Newell: Yes. I didn't know. And I told them at the hotel that I didn't want any calls to go to them; every call for them would come through me. Well, we were so unknown, nobody bothered us, actually.

A Wild Game Against CCNY, 1949

Newell: So we went out that night, and we played CCNY, which was undefeated. Nat Holman was their coach, a legendary coach, a wonderful guy again. I was so thrilled just to be coaching against him, to be on the same court with him, I didn't know what I told my team.

Lage: Did you tell your team, "Well, you're going to win"?

Newell: Oh, sure. Well, yes, but we felt--we had come this far, and we finally got to the Garden, we've got to win. So anyway, we get ahead. We're ahead four points, which is a lot of points for us, because we could really handle the ball. And it's just like we ran into a wall. The euphoria of everything, and no sleep to speak of, not the kind of a sleep that we were all used to, the

excitement and playing the night before, and a real tough game--we just ran into a wall with about two minutes to go. And my God, they tied it.

So now we go into an overtime. Now, you've got to realize, being in the Garden, we're all on Cloud Eight, and we want to be on our best behavior and all. So we get into the overtime, and now we come up with a four-point lead again, and there's about a minute and a half to go, and I got this kid, Hanley, who's a real Irish enforcer.

Lage: With the tattoos?

Newell: Yes, with the tattoos. And I just had the time out, and I said, "Now, I don't want you to foul, I want you to make them shoot over you, don't foul," and I'm going on. And Dambrot is the captain of the other team, and Hanley is guarding him, and our bench is about five feet from Dambrot, who is inbounding the ball. I'm sitting here, and I'm looking at the players out here and yelling, "Pick that guy up," or "Pick this guy," I'm paying no attention to Dambrot or Hanley.

The next thing I know, I see the ball come in the court, and I hear whistles everywhere, and I've got a player right on my lap. It's Dambrot. I hear booing and everything happening, and I don't know what happened.

What had happened is, Dambrot threw the ball and he took one step, and Hanley knocked him, "Bang!" So I'm really upset. Now, this might [laughing] end up as a farce, and an intentional foul, which means two foul shots and they get the ball back. I could kill Hanley, absolutely could kill him.

Lage: Do you show this?

Newell: Do I show it? Well--

Lage: Or did you have your towel?

Newell: I had my towel, but I can't do much with Hanley, because Hanley, instead of coming to the bench, goes across, and he's like Jimmy Cagney in a picture when all the cops are trying to shoot him, and he's down on one knee, you know--[laughter] And I'm going, "Hanley, get over here!" And he's paying no attention. In the meantime, the guy is shooting the foul shots, and I want to go across and grab Hanley by the scruff of the neck and haul him back over there--

Lage: There's only so much you can do.

Newell: Yes, so much I can do. Finally--and I'm afraid they're going to call a technical, because he's on the other side now, anything can happen. But he hit this guy so hard that the guy missed both foul shots.

Lage: [laughs] Well, if you're going to do it, you might as well do it well!

Newell: Well, that's what I told him. I said, "The only good thing you did, you hit him hard enough to blow the foul shots." But finally he comes over, and instead of sitting on the bench, some people had left right behind the bench, because they thought the game was over. And he's sitting down there. Well, I just forget about the game, I'm so anxious to tell him what I think. "What goes through your mind? What possibly could have caused you to make such a dumb play?"

"Hadda, Pete." I said, "What do you mean, you 'hadda Pete'?" "Well, I hadda, Pete." "Well, tell me why you 'hadda Pete,' will you tell me why you hadda?" "He called me a dirty Irish Catholic." I said, "He called you a dirty Irish Catholic?" He said, "Yep."

I said, "Let's examine that. You're Irish, you're Catholic, and it's obvious the way you hit him that you're dirty!" And he thought a while, he looked at me, he says, "Pete, it was the way he said it." [laughter]

So with that--I'm not even paying attention to the game now, I'm so upset with him. It's like you've taken your kid into a neighbor or to a friend's house and he broke an ashtray--it was like that. So now, the game's over. And with that, he jumps over the seats and runs out at the referees.

Lage: Oh, no!

Newell: Yes.

Lage: Now the game is over and you've lost?

Newell: The game's over, and we've won it!

Lage: Oh, you won! Well, you didn't tell me that part!

Newell: Oh, yes, we won the game. We were ahead four points, he missed the foul shots, all their remaining shots.

Lage: Well, you must have been happy.

Newell: I was and I wasn't, because now Hanley jumps onto the court and he runs out at the referees. The referees have the cord that goes around their neck and holds the whistle, see, and they've got the ball. He runs to the referee, and this referee is scared to death. He sees these couple of battleships coming down on him, and as Hanley grabs the ball, he gets hold of the cord that the whistle's tied on and as he pulls the ball he almost breaks the referee's neck, because he's strong. He's like a bull.

Lage: He wanted the winning ball?

Newell: He wanted the ball, see. I'm really mortified now. Now, again it's like a Cagney movie. The cops, they always have cops. Now they've got him surrounded. Hanley has got the ball, and I'm yelling, and I'm saying to myself, "Run right outside, run that way, Jack," because the dressing rooms are here; I'm hoping he runs out of the place, out on 8th Avenue, and they kill him when he gets out there.

So finally, Ned Irish comes up, "Hey, let him have the ball." He talked to everybody, "Let him have the ball." And when he sees Ned Irish, he recognizes him, because you used to see pictures of him all the time, and "Thank you, sir, thank you." And he comes on into the dressing room.

So now I get hold of him. And Ned Irish can't believe what he's seeing. The crowd had loved Rene Herrerias, who was my little guard. Ned came into the dressing room, and he said, "Coach, I just want to see that little guard of yours, that little Rene." I introduced him to him. Rene was really the favorite. The New York people all got behind us. Even though we were playing CCNY, we had more people rooting for us, I think.

Lage: Because you were underdogs?

Newell: Well, because of San Francisco, and Rene, and they liked our team, and we tried, we weren't fancy, we just played tough basketball.

But now I get a hold of Hanley. I said, "Now, you just tried to explain that other situation. Now explain this to me. What's this all about?" "Well, Pete," he says, "in the Avenues when we play, the winning team gets the ball." I said, "We're not in the Avenues." He said, "I don't know, maybe you're not in the Avenues, but I'm in the Avenues, and that's what happens. The winning team gets the ball."

I said, "You must have a lot of fights." "Oh, we have a lot of fights, but the winning team still gets the ball." [laughs] Ned Irish is there. He said, "I've heard a lot of reasons for doing things, but that's the damndest

reason I ever heard: the winning team gets the ball." [laughter] So that was our debut.

And then we went and played Bradley and beat Bradley.

Lage: What a trip!

Newell: We won all three teams, and that's how--yes. And then we ended up with a big season, and--

Lage: That upped your reputation nationwide, I would think.

Newell: Yes. And that really did. And again, I owe it to Sam, and Everett Dean helped him, but Sam particularly, who helped get me the opportunity to play there. And then that helped recruiting, and it helped the program, and gave USF, which was nothing in basketball, its first national recognition. So when Bill Russell and the Phil Woolpert teams came along, USF was well known and well respected in New York, which was, as I say, the seat of basketball then.

Pete's Innovations at USF: Guarding the Ball, Press Defense

Lage: Were you showing them a type of basketball that wasn't being played back there?

Newell: Yes.

Lage: What were the differences?

Newell: Well, it was principally the defense. It was a real hard, tough play on the ball, denial of leads, weak-side help--which they didn't do then. They used to play the weak side--

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Lage: Now what do you mean weak-side help?

Newell: The weak side is the side of the court away from the ball; strong side is ball side. An imaginary line from basket to basket is the midline. A player should have a mid-point vision. If you're guarding the ball, I'm seeing your man, and I'm seeing mine, but I'm alert, in case your man gets by you, to help you out. When I see your man I'm seeing the ball peripherally.

Lage: So you have to defend a man, but you also watch for the ball?

Newell: Yes, you have a team responsibility, too.

Lage: Is that pretty well the way players play now?

Newell: It wasn't then, no. That was Jimmy's concept of it; it was played by other teams, but not as religiously followed as we had learned to follow it. You have to have good position to have good vision. And the idea is, you never want to be a head-turner. I'm guarding you, and the ball is over there, and if I turn here, you back-cut me. So what I have to do is make sure I fall back so that you're in my vision and the ball is in my vision. To have good vision, you have to have good position.

But in the East at that time they used to play that regardless of where the ball is you guard your man. If the ball is strong side and I am guarding you weak side, that means no help, really, for the man guarding the ball. The weak side defense only watched their man and did not help his teammates defensively. But our defense was always the opposite. We were always helping the person guarding the ball, because the person with the ball is the only guy that can shoot the ball. And then we emphasized good vision--if I can see you, and you start a cut, I can beat you on the cut, but if I turn and look at the ball, you can beat me on a cut or you can back-cut me, and I don't see you until you've got the ball or are about to receive it.

Lage: Were there other things in your approach that were different from the predominant style?

Newell: No, except aggressiveness on the ball--the press defense. One of the things I did when I was at USF that was revolutionary at the time, and I did it not trying to invent anything, but it's common today. It's the way the game's played today, and we were the first ones to do it when I was at USF: I had Rene Herrerias, who was five-seven, and another guard who was about five-nine, five-nine and a half, and they were my offensive rebounders. I had--

Lage: Your offensive rebounders? [laughs]

Newell: Well, that's the way it was; remember, what I was telling you about the game with the center jump. Even though the center jump had been eliminated, after the war they started off playing the same way. They didn't invert. So we were always sound on the board. And another thing Jimmy taught us about always having a triangle on the board. So I worked out a scheme of rebounding that gave the players definite positions to go to when the ball was shot in certain situations, or certain parts of the court. For instance, if we were going this way, and you were a wing or a forward, and

you shot the ball from there, or the guard on your side shot the ball from there, you rebounded it at the foul line. Who was ever at the center position or post position always rebounded strong side underneath and the weak side rebounded underneath so you always had a triangle.

And as I say, that's one of the things that Jimmy taught and taught and taught, and one of the things that really was imprinted, so when I started coaching that's one reason no team-- even in my first year--nobody could fast break us because we were always sound on the board, we always had the triangle.

So the second year at USF, I got John Benington, who later became coach at Saint Louis and Michigan State University--he was my assistant when I was at Michigan State--and at USF he was my captain, and the guy that was my golf coach. John was six-four [six feet, four inches]; couldn't dribble the ball twice without kicking it. So I had a real problem with John bringing the ball up and being a guard. So I thought, Well, I'm going to play my big guys on the board. I didn't start off the season that way, but I practiced it. We used to have spring practice; I practiced it one time. I couldn't see any problem as long as we were solid on the board, because that meant that we could pressure the rebounder, and the other two men could get back. I would take my little guards, and I'd make them the offensive guards, and then they'd flare out and they'd pick up any leads.

Once we stopped the ball--now, they had their big guards bringing the ball up. I'd get my three men back, and now as they'd bring the ball up, we started what we called a half-court press. We started to press them. Well, I had my little mosquitoes with their big elephants, and we're starting to steal the ball. We were picking up farther in their back court, and they couldn't adjust to it. We started to beat teams by this mismatch.

We were doing a lot better job on the board, both boards, because I had my big men on both boards. It's just the way they play now. But see, you never played that way before, because of the center jump. The war came so soon after the center jump was eliminated that there was no creativity, there was no real adjustment to the rule. Remember I told you it takes six, seven years to adjust to rule changes. Well, I'd like to say that I thought of it during the war, but I didn't, and I didn't think of it in terms of creating anything, but we were the first ones to play a press defense in the West because of it.

Lage: So you recognized that the elimination of the center jump allowed a press defense, or required a press defense?

Newell: Well, it didn't really require it, no. But I felt that, now that I've stopped the ball and I've got my two men back, now I've got this mismatch in my favor, their big cumbersome guy is trying to get the ball up against my small guy, so I really started off just playing man-to-man on it, and then I just took the next step, and then I added a zone press type. And one I called later the coward's press, and the other, the zone press.

I still believe in the concept, where it's a complimentary thing; it's a game of counters and adjustments.

Simply, you play a conservative man-to-man press. The opponent will have a plan to beat your press. After you can assess their plan, you counter with a zone-type press that takes away the effectiveness of their original plan. You counter and that's what basketball is all about. Countering the opponent. That is why teaching is so important, as counters are taught when a coach teaches his offense or defense.

NIT Championship, 1949

Newell: I used that at Cal, and I used it there at USF, and we won--. When I was at USF that year we won those three games back East, and we went on to have a twenty-one and four season [twenty-one wins, four losses]. Then we went back, and we won four games in the NIT [National Invitational Tournament], and the NIT was the national championship then.

Lage: It was more important than the NCAA tournament then?

Newell: Oh, much more. Well, just to give you an idea: Kentucky, that great Kentucky team, got knocked out of that NIT that we won [in 1949] in the first round, and the next week Kentucky went back and won the NCAA. So yes, the NCAA was not near the tournament it is today.

Lage: USF went to the NIT in '48-'49.

Newell: In '48-'49 and '49-'50 seasons. We won it in '49, and we went again in '49-'50, but we got beat. But we had a good year. We didn't have as good a year as we had the year before; we had some injuries. My center was hurt early in the season.

Lage: I'd say you learned pretty fast.

Newell: Well, you did learn fast in those days for a lot of reasons. One is, the thing that helped me more than anything--other than the people who helped me--was we had spring practice. Every goofy idea I ever had in my mind, and I had a lot of goofy ones, I practiced. I'd try them at the spring practice, and this thing I just told you about, I tried that. "Why can't we do that?" I talked to Phil, "Why can't we do that?" "Well, let's try it." And we tried it, and--

Lage: Did the players adjust to it well? Did they like it?

Newell: Well, yes. They love the press. Players like to play the press. But I didn't start off the season with it, and I don't know exactly why at this point, and it wasn't that I was trying to surprise anybody, but maybe I just didn't feel comfortable enough at that point. I wanted to get us off to a good start. I had some new players; one of them was Lofgran, too.

I added two players. I had a great guard by the name of Frankie Kuzara, and he later became an All-American. Frankie was a very, very integral part of our team. In fact, he made the basket that beat Utah in the NIT. And Utah, we beat them again, the third time. That's right, we beat them a third time in the NIT, the same team.

Lage: They must have got tired of seeing you come up!

Newell: I figured they may turn out to be Catholics before too long.

But anyway, we won the NIT then, and then the next year we got beat. Then I went to Michigan State.

IV MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, 1950-1954

A Challenge and a Chance to Test Pete's Defensive Theories

Lage: Now, why did you make that change [to Michigan State University]?

Newell: Well, again, it was a really important step for me. More money, but that was incidental, really. What it was, was an opportunity. I had these theories, and now I had recognition as one of the best young defensive coaches in basketball. Fellows like Hank Iba, who were at the top, would recommend me for clinics, especially on the defensive end. Even though I didn't know him, he didn't know me, he'd go out of his way to tell people about "that young guy out in the West, his team really knows how to play defense, and it's a concept that other coaches are going to be following," and all, and I didn't even know Hank at the time. Later he became a great friend. But he really helped me get some national recognition, although winning in New York had given me--. I lost out by only one vote on the coach of the year, which was really something.

Lage: On the year you won the NIT?

Newell: Yes. Henry Iba got it that year. But of course, he was recognized, and he had a great year, too, although he wasn't in the NIT, but he was in the NCAA. He didn't win it; Kentucky beat him. But he had had a great year and was very well thought of.

So I went to Michigan State. About six or seven coaches had turned down the Michigan State job, with good reason. And as I say, ignorance is bliss. The reason they turned it down was that the team had gone four and eighteen [four wins, eighteen losses] the year before. They had about three players of Big Ten caliber, but Michigan State was not in the Big Ten that year. But my first year was the first year they were in the Big Ten. These

other coaches were looking at the material, and Michigan State's only players had graduated, except one sophomore who had been their leading scorer. The material was--well, they were being beaten by teams like Western Reserve and Case, and there were no freshmen.

That was what I was trying to think of: there were no freshmen on the freshman team. Because two years before, the season before last, it was the last season of Coach Ben Van Alstyin, who had been there for twenty-some years as the head coach, and he had retired. In the interim, they made an assistant football coach the basketball coach.

Lage: Oh, they just let the program go.

Newell: Yes, they let the program go. He had a summer camp up in Upper Peninsula in Michigan that he had to go to in June, and they had spring football practice all during May, so as soon as spring practice was over, he headed for his camp up there and didn't come back until September. So he didn't have one basketball player he recruited. There was not a basketball player in his freshman group. And now they're graduating two players that were two of their best players, and the third one, as I say, was this sophomore.

Lage: And they had only gone four and eighteen.

Newell: They went four and eighteen, and not only that, but they were not playing against Big-Ten level competition too often.

Lage: [laughs] But did you look at all these things?

Newell: Yes. But as I say, the challenge of it--I was so interested from a professional standpoint of testing my theory that I had arrived at through all these various things that I've told you. I was so confident of my ability to teach defense, not offense, but defense, and get kids to play defense, that didn't bother me. Even at Cal, we didn't win with the top players. We never got the top players there.

Lage: But you did have freshmen coming up. The situation at Michigan State--

Newell: Oh, yes, we always had a balanced program, sure. We always had that. But Michigan State was a shambles. And that's why these other coaches all passed it up, but God, their facilities were good. At USF, I practiced in a place called Page Street. The Page Street Gym to this day I'll believe was the bottom floor of a cathouse.

Lage: This is USF?

Newell: I swear to God; USF. And we practiced down there. It was the Page Street Gym, and I think it was the only thing that escaped the 1906 fire; it was older than God knows what. [Laughs] We won a national championship out of this place. We couldn't use half the court when it rained, because kids had broken all the windows up above, and the rain would come through. We didn't have a trainer; we taped ourselves. It was a dimly lit place, and it was always dirty because the damn windows were open, and the manager always had to go over the floor with a wet mop, take the dust off the top because it would be slippery as the devil if we didn't.

And then the showers were really something. One day they're hot, the next day they're cold, but you never had hot and cold the same day. Hanley, in particular, was always complaining, "Haah, the damn thing's cold!" I said, "What are you squawking about? Yesterday you were squawking because it was hot. Toughen up."

Lage: [laughs] That's a good approach. Did you complain? Did you try to get better facilities?

Newell: Oh, you couldn't. I tried, but there were no facilities to get. The high school also would practice there.

Lage: And then where did you play your games?

Newell: Kezar. We practiced one time for a while at Kezar, but they had a lot of events in there, and it wasn't a place that you could just routinely practice at. You couldn't spend a season in there. But again, it shows that all you need is space. It doesn't have to be an ornate facility.

But when I went back to Michigan State, I saw their facility. My God, a great big arena, Jenison held 12,500, which was a lot. I had three practice courts, I couldn't believe it, after three-quarters of a practice court at Page Street. I thought, "My golly, if we can do so well out of that little place, what we can do here!" And the people were great there. As I say, if I were an older coach, I'd have more sense than to take the job.

Great Athletes and Recognition for Team Players

Lage: But it was a chance--

Newell: Oh, it was great. I wanted to learn more about basketball, that side of basketball, because I recognized that we did not play great offensive

basketball. When [John] Wooden came out [to UCLA] from Indiana State, he played what we would call now transition basketball. We didn't play that. He learned defense from us, and we learned transition from him. So I wanted to see what the Indiana team was doing; I wanted to see Ohio State and Purdue and all those well-known teams.

Lage: And were you thinking to improve your offensive game?

Newell: Yes. That was basically what I wanted, to learn more about offense. I had no worry at all about my ability to stop Indiana from running, fast-breaking us. In fact, the first year I was at Michigan State, I played with a five-eight forward, a six-one forward, six-four center, and two five-ten guards. Now, that's really small. And technically, we were really good, in terms of screening out. We never got beat badly on the boards.

My center was a football player, Bob Carey, and he was a great athlete. He was a shotput champion of the Big Ten also. His brother and I were in the navy together, so we had a kind of personal relationship there, because I knew the family real well. He was at Michigan State before I got there, and he was an all-American in football. He was the number one draft choice for the Rams when he got out of college.

He was such a great athlete. Shotputting hurt his shooting in basketball, but he was so active, so quick--he was like a cat, and strong--that he was a real asset, because he really was good in the press, he was so active and so quick. And we used the press a lot, and it was something new to them. Actually, we had teams playing even our offense of reverse action, and defensively, we brought a whole different style of defense.

That first year, we were nine and thirteen, but we were playing in the Big Ten. The last game of the year, I'm playing Illinois, who went on to win the league that year. At that time they were one game ahead of Indiana. This was an important game for Illinois because only the winning team in the conference went to the NCAA in those days. So anyway, we play them, and we play really a terrific game. Ahead of them the whole game. I had a kid who was the elected captain. In those days, before I got there, they elected a captain for that team. I never did that. I never had an elected captain before; I always appointed a captain. I'd appoint different ones. Psychologically, sometimes, I'd appoint a player that maybe I would feel that it would be just enough to get him to the right competitive edge.

This kid was the nicest kid I'd ever met in my life, but he wasn't a very good ball player. And in those days, being captain, you're supposed to play, and it really bothered me that as the season went on, I gave him a start, but he just was not capable of playing the kind of basketball and being the kind

of guard I needed. I needed a quick guard, especially with the press, and a real student of the game. Both my guards later became college coaches at Michigan State. They understood the game and were on the same page as me.

This kid was a great kid. He's one of the kids who shows up at our meetings every year, but basketball didn't come easy to him. It just didn't come easy. But this last game of the year, he's a senior, and he's just a great kid, and there's no way that I'm not going to give him his due as captain. I start him in the game--he hadn't started a game for maybe twelve or fourteen games. He plays really good, but I know that when he gets a little pressure on him, he gets really tense, and he'll throw the ball all over. I want to play him as long as I can.

We go into about four minutes to go. We're ahead six points.

Lage: Four minutes in the game, and he's still playing?

Newell: Yes. Well, I've had him out; he has to rest, but he hasn't panicked on me yet. Those days, the team sat under the basket. In the second half, my team is coming toward my bench. I guess we're eight points ahead; they make a basket. He takes the ball out and carelessly throws it in, and now there's only three minutes to go, and they quickly turn and start pressing us. I have two guards on the bench, one guard on the bench is a really good ball handler. I've got him ready to go in. When he throws that ball to the opponent, bang, I've got my starting guard reporting to get in.

Now he's got the ball again out of bounds. Now he throws the ball down the court, and they intercept that. I can't get my player in. Then he has the other guard throw the ball in to him, and he takes one dribble and they steal it. I'm trying to get him to get a time out, but they're all the way down at the other end. And he doesn't call a time out, and he should have called a time out after the first one, but he didn't.

So now it's a tied score, and there's about maybe two minutes to go. This all started happening maybe with three minutes to go. I would never berate him or blame him or anything; I probably should have anticipated this happening and got him out with a big cheer and all that, but I wanted to let him finish the game if he could.

But they won the game. I remember their coach after, because it meant the conference championship for him, which was really important to him. He told me, "Pete, I really appreciate that. I know that if you--" because he knew this kid "--that if you had the other kid in there that we wouldn't have touched the ball at the end." Because they were big, and my

guys were small. With six points, I think we could play them for twenty minutes and they wouldn't get six points on us. You know, when we've got a lead, we could stall the ball; they didn't have the shot clock then. He knew that, and I knew it.

Lage: But he thought that you were doing him a favor?

Newell: Well, no, he knew that if I just wanted to win the game. . . . He understood who you play, and he appreciated the fact that I would play a player who was the captain, even though it was a big feather in your cap if you beat the team that's going for the conference championship and knock them out of the running. But I'd like to have done it, I wanted to, but I also felt a responsibility to not sit on the ball at the four-minute mark. With two minutes to go I would have, but because it was a championship game for him I played it straight. I would do the same thing today.

Lage: But you wanted to win.

Newell: Sure, and we practiced to do it, and we were ahead. We outplayed them for thirty-eight minutes. And we missed the shot that would have won the game. When the game got tied, we called the time out and I substituted this kid, and we moved the ball, and with about thirty seconds to go, we got a good shot, and we missed it. Then they came on down, and they made the shot, and they beat us two points. But he knew and I knew that we could have won the game. That never bothered me.

It would have bothered me more if I hadn't played the kid in the last game of his senior year. If we were playing for the championship, it would have been altogether different. I would have owed it to our players to do everything I could to get them their championship, within the rules. But this wasn't the case. We weren't going anywhere, and while it would have momentarily been great to get the win, it was even better for me to give this kid his moment in the sun, because he had worked hard all year in practice, and he did the things that I expect a captain to do off the court. He was a very good leader in that sense, and everybody liked him and respected him. But they also knew that he was just not that good a player.

Lage: Does it create any dissension, though, on the team, when you make a decision like that?

Newell: No. I think it isn't something that you even ask the team about. But I think if you've developed a team concept and team spirit, it's no problem. I remember when I was at Cal, we played Arizona, and we were beating Arizona about twenty-five points at Arizona, with about two minutes to go. I'd taken fifteen players on the trip, and one of the players was a non-

scholarship kid, Denny Bertlesmen. Denny was just a tremendously popular guy on the team, and he worked hard at practice, and he just wasn't a Pac-Ten player in that sense. But he was good in practice, he was always ready to play, and all that.

So with about two minutes to go, and I'd already put in a lot of substitutes, I put Denny in. My regulars were all out, Larry Friend, the captain, the regulars and all those guys, they were out, and they were rooting. Denny makes a basket, and the game is over. They all ran out on the court, and they picked him up and carried him off the court. And Fred Enke was the Arizona coach. He came over and said, "Pete, what was that all about? Why did they carry that kid? That kid didn't do anything. He just got in at the very end, why--?"

So I told him. I said, "Well, he's a walk-on. It's the first trip he's ever made. It's only the second game he's ever been in. I had him playing on the JV team. The players did that in recognition of what his effort has been in the program. He's a senior, he made a basket, and they're so happy for him."

In fact, Denny caused me to really have Cal change the rule on earning a letter. It was my contention--and I really strongly fought for it, and I was in a position to fight because our team was really doing well--that a player should earn a letter if he was on a team for four years, regardless of the minutes he played. I said, "If he's a good enough player to be on your practice team for four years, and if the coach recommends him, then he automatically gets his letter. He doesn't have to meet any other standard, of minutes played, or games, or conference games, or any of that stuff, because his contribution obviously has been great, if he's been out there at that practice for four years."

Lage: That's right. You couldn't do it without him.

Newell: That's exactly right. And they did change it. I think he was the first one to get a letter that way. I don't know how it is now, but I know when I was athletic director at Cal, we adhered to that. No, I firmly believe that. I told you, I think, that it was more important for me to satisfy the twelfth player on the team than the first one. Because those are the guys that have been at practice, make practices meaningful because they're giving effort all the time.

Ned [Averbuck] was one of those twelfth men, and nobody feels more a part of the team than he does. I wanted the other players to understand that they were as important.

Team Progress at Michigan State

[Interview 2: February 24, 1994]##

Lage: Before we move on to Berkeley, I want to wrap up Michigan State. Did you test your theory there? Did you learn?

Newell: Yes, I did. I learned. I always felt--I still feel that I'm a student of the game. I still learn. I feel that every time you see a game, you see something you haven't seen. But I did, I really wanted to test my defensive theory, particularly against the teams where the best basketball was, which was the Middle West. Also, to take the challenge of a job like that.

Lage: Going from nothing.

Newell: Yes, knowing that you're going in with nothing, absolutely--the remnants of a four and eighteen team with no freshmen. All the time at Michigan State, I had a dead class [from that first year with no freshman].

Lage: And how did it go? We haven't really gotten a sense of what you accomplished.

Newell: Well, the first year we won nine, and the next year we won, I think, twelve or thirteen, and I think the same the next year. And then the last year, I really had my best team. I had a team that really could have contended. But I just had some unfortunate things happen. My captain got mono [mononucleosis], and he wasn't able to play. One of my starting guards couldn't pass the physical for advanced ROTC, and this doctor said he had a degenerate heart. He had never had any problems, he had taken other physicals, and it never showed. About four doctors there examined him and every one of them said that it was not an abnormal thing at all; it was something that some hearts have, but it had nothing to do with athletics or anything like that. But the one doctor, he wouldn't back off. I just couldn't play him. It was a sad thing, because he really wanted to play, and he was really a good player.

Lage: Did you feel as if you couldn't, or was there--

Newell: I just felt that if anything happened to him when I had that one doctor's advice--I had thought maybe the doctors would consult and come to an agreement with him, that he could play, but that one doctor wouldn't back off. And because he wouldn't back off, there was no way. If there were a hundred doctors who said, "Okay," I just felt that I couldn't do it to the kid. It turns out that he'd come out to practice every day and practice on his

own every day with us. It was a young doctor, and I don't know why he was so obstinate on it, other than maybe just that's what he felt. He obviously felt it. I can't question he'd do it for any other reason. But that was a blow.

The Saga of Ricky Ayala, MSU's First Black Player

Newell: And then I lost my second guard. In the Big Ten, if you get one F, you're ineligible. I had a great little black guard who had played for me for three years, and he knew my system better than I did. This kid, there is really a story on him; I'm real proud of him. When I was at USF, I had Rene Herrerias playing. In those days, because teams didn't invert, your ideal size was all about the same [for forwards and guards], because you wanted to have some speed at your guards, but you needed size. You wanted some speed and some size at the board. Six-three to six-five--there weren't many small guys playing then. So say six-three to six-five. Teams didn't play smaller guys. But Rene was only five-seven. I liked to have a point guard who was a leader, who was smart and understood the game. Smaller players seemed to have these qualities. So I played smaller players.

So when Rene played in New York, this kid Ricky Ayala would sneak in the Garden somewhere, and he just made up his mind, "I'm going to play for that coach there, because he'll play a small guy."

Lage: Oh, this little kid saw Rene play in New York?

Newell: He saw Rene in the Garden [when USF played in the tournament in 1949], yes. He used to sneak in the Garden, he had ways of sneaking in. So he writes me a letter when I was at USF and introduces himself. He doesn't say anything about being black or not. His name was Reginald Ayala.

Lage: But he said he was short?

Newell: Yes, he--I'm not sure how tall he said he was--I think he cheated a little, five-seven or something he said, but he wasn't five-seven, more like five-five. But anyway, he said, "I'd like to come to the University of San Francisco and play basketball in your program, because I'm--" I think he said "--about Rene's size, and you'll play a small player, and I can play, and I'd like to have the chance." So I wrote him back, and about that time is when I was leaving USF. I said, "Well, I'm sorry, but I'm going to Michigan State. I'll be the coach there."

So before I got to Michigan State, I had sent John Benington there. John was there maybe two months before me. I had talked him into being my assistant coach. He had already graduated the year before, the year we won the NIT. He was the captain of that team.

Lage: And you saw coaching ability in him?

Newell: Yes. I brought him back to Michigan State with me, he and his wife, Barbara. They had a young baby at that time. They had been married a couple of years before. In fact, Barbara and Florence were very close at San Francisco, and of course they were like sisters when they went back there; they were together all the time. My third son, Roger, the one that lives with me here, was the same age as their first daughter. So John went back there by himself first.

Anyway, when I got back there, here's this little black kid waiting for me. He's polite as can be, and a husky little guy. He said, "I'm Ricky Ayala." So I said, "What can I do for you?" I had forgotten all about it. "I wrote you a letter. I was the player, the one from New York, that wrote you a letter about playing for you at USF, and when you came here, I decided I wanted to come here to play."

And I said, "Well, Ricky, do you have a transcript?" He said, "I have one." I looked at it, and I said, "Ricky, you couldn't get into reform school with this transcript." He said, "Coach, if I get in school, will you let me come out for basketball? I'm not asking for a scholarship; will you let me come out for basketball?"

I said, "With this transcript, if you can get into this school--" and I don't even know the process there. I don't know anybody in the administration end of it, the enrollment or the director of admissions, or any of those people. I talked to John about him and John had met him before, and John had really been captivated by him.

Lage: Had John seen him play?

Newell: No, none of us had seen him play, but I figured if he's from New York, and he's coming that far, he can play. I didn't know how well he could play, but he could play. I figured if he's smart enough to get in, and he's sharp enough to get what I try to teach--

Lage: And aggressive enough!

Newell: And by golly, I'm checking with John, and I said, "John, have you heard from that little kid?" "No," he said, "No, I haven't heard." But we never followed up on it, because we never thought he could get in.

So about a week later, he comes in, and he said, "Well, I got in." I said, "You got in?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, if you can't play basketball, I'm going to make you an assistant and have you help other guys get in here," something like that.

So anyway, he comes, and he's just a tremendously smart player. In fact, he was so good dribbling the ball that later when he wanted to go to graduate school, to earn money for graduate school he played for the Globetrotters for a year as a dribbler. That's how good he was dribbling. For two years, he was on the defensive team in the Big Ten.

Anyway, so he's enrolled. There are only four schools that have a hotel administration course in the country at that time: Denver, Washington State, Cornell, and Michigan State. I get a bright idea one day: the fellow that was the head of the Michigan State hotel program, a fellow by the name of Les Scott, used to be the president of Harveys Restaurants, and was very, very well known in Chicago in the hotel business. He was manager for some of the top hotels there. He was head of the hotel administration program, and he's a good sports fan. I got to know him, and he and his wife and Florence and I, we knew each other.

So one day, I said, "Do you have any black kids in your--" Negro kids, that's what we used to say. "Any Negro kids in your school?" "No, no." I said, "I've got a kid, and I really don't want him to go into P.E.[physical education]. I think he's a bright kid, and I think he's academically able to do a lot of things. I just think that this would be an opportunity for someone like him, when he graduates from school, to be in almost a professional position, of being one of the very few black, Negro, hotel administration degree people. There should be a lot of opportunity for him."

He said, "I think it would be great." I said, "Well, I'm going to bring him over and let you talk to him, and we'll get him transferred out at the end of the quarter. We'll get him into your school." He said, "That's great." So I set it up.

Of course, Ricky had never been in a hotel.

Lage: [laughs] What did Ricky think of your idea?

Newell: Anything I said was all right. "Okay, Coach, if that's what you think." I said, "That's what I think."

Lage: He's mainly interested in basketball.

Newell: Basketball, yes. And so he gets into hotel administration.

Well, he really--in high school, he majored in basketball, so his grades weren't good, and he didn't have really good study habits to begin with, but he was a smart kid, and he knew certain things he had to do. So he did acquire some study habits, and he liked it, and it was such a great experience for him there, that he knew he had to sacrifice something. He was a kid who was no problem, no problem at all. He just loved to play the game, and he knew to play the game he was going to have to do certain things.

When he first came there, all he was interested in was getting in. Well, as time went on, he became really interested in the hotel administration career and applied himself. He became a pretty good student.

His first semester in his senior year, he wanted to graduate on time. His first semester of his senior year, there was required course that he should have taken as a freshman, but he didn't. It conflicted--the only time it was taught was the same time he had to take another required course for his graduation, one of those things that you run into. So he came to me, he said, "What can I do?" I said, "Well, the obvious thing to do is to go talk to both professors, and tell them that you have this problem, and that attendance could be a problem, because you can't be both places at the same time, and is there some arrangement you could make, especially with that freshman course, is there some arrangement you could make where you could do the work that you weren't able to do when you weren't there, and just sit down--."

Well, they had a T.A. teaching this class, and he told Ricky, "Yeah, you can do it, if you do this and this." The other one said, "Hey, yeah." The other one was a regular professor who he had in other classes. So he came and he said, "It's all set." I said, "You're sure now." "Yeah."

Well, this damn T.A.--Ricky got good grades in all the tests, but his T.A. flunked him on attendance. I got the head of the department--I didn't talk to him directly, because that would have been something that a guy like that could really make an issue of. You know, you're getting coerced by a coach. But I talked to him, and I told him the unfairness of it. It obviously was a simple class. And he knew Ricky, and Ricky was one of the most popular--he was very, very popular, not only on campus but off campus.

So he talked to this T.A., and this guy wouldn't bend. He said, "No, his attendance--." "Well, didn't you talk to him?" "Yes, I talked to him, and

I told him if he did the work, but I didn't talk to him on attendance." "Well, didn't he tell you?" "Yes." "Well, didn't it occur to you that the attendance was really what he was talking about?"

"Well, I didn't think of it that way. I just thought that he may, because he had this other class, may have a problem keeping up with the class." And the guy was a--I'll never forget, he was a part-time mail carrier, what he was. That was his main job.

Lage: The T.A., you mean?

Newell: Yes. He was a mail carrier. So Ricky only was able to play the first quarter, up until January 1.

Lage: Of his senior year.

Newell: Yes. And it was funny, at the end of his sophomore year, it was the spring quarter, he got an F in a course, low attendance. I really came down hard on him. We had a fellow named Al Windrow with whom I used to play golf, and Al had a laundry and really loved basketball. The players all knew him, and he was not a money contributor or anything like that. He was a real good golfer, and he was a good friend of my assistant, John. He loved Ricky. So I told Ricky, "You're off scholarship this quarter." I had put him on scholarship after his first quarter, because he didn't have any money. He was from a tenement in New York.

So I told John, "I took Ricky off scholarship for this quarter." He said, "How's he going to get by?" I said, "Well, he'll figure out a way. But I want him to really think about it. I want you to call him and just see what he has to say. But in the meantime, I'm going to call Al Windrow, and he's got a job at the laundry down at the very bottom, the dirtiest, lousiest job he's got." I called Al, and Al said, "I don't want to put Ricky down there." I said, "You put Ricky down there. I want Ricky to understand what he may be losing." Because Ricky didn't have any money.

So anyway, John calls him up and says, "Well, why don't you call Al Windrow. He'll have a job." "Oh, that's a good idea." So he calls him, and Al says, "Yeah, Ricky, I've got a job here. It's not too--" "Oh, any kind of a job." "Are you sure?" "Yeah, any kind of a job. I've got to pay my dorm and all that."

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Newell: So Ricky did it.

Lage: And then he got back on scholarship?

Newell: Yes. But I really kept him on. I kept him on the scholarship, but I told him I was taking him off. The season was over, and I just wanted him to recognize just how much his scholarship meant, what an education meant, really. He was the first black player to play at Michigan State.

He said to me one day, "You know, there haven't been any Negroes playing here." I said, "Well, I never thought of it, I don't know." At that time, there was only one playing in the whole Big Ten, a kid by the name of--he was from Indiana--Garrett. He said, "You know, I really look like I could be Cuban." I said, "You look like you could be a lot of things, but you're a Negro, so what's the problem?"

"Well," he said, "I want to play, and I don't want to--" I said, "Don't worry about it. If there's a problem there, that's my problem, not yours."

The upshot of it, he went to--

Lage: He went to graduate school?

Newell: Well, he went with the Globetrotters, and he got the money to go to graduate school at Michigan State. He married and had about five or six kids. I think three of them are Ivy League graduates. One son is an airline pilot. He's the top hospital administrator in the state of Michigan, in Detroit, recently retired.

Tremendously successful. And just as supportive of the school now as you could ever imagine. I always think of Ricky when I hear people pontificate, "Well, he can't make it, or he can't make it academically, because--" It's like a question; you don't know the answer until somebody asks you the question. It doesn't mean that everybody can do what he did, but you just can't say that they can't do it, without giving them a chance.

And as a basketball player, he was tremendously effective. He was a great defensive player, smart as could be, dribbled the ball all day, and nobody could ever get it from him. He was built like a Spartan; he was about this wide, and long arms, and you just couldn't get the ball from him. He was so quick and could protect it so well.

Lage: If he had been taller, would he have been able to go on in the pros?

Newell: Oh, sure, absolutely. He wasn't a great scorer, but he was a Jason Kidd kind of a player. He didn't have the physical things that Jason has, but he had the understanding of the game like he has, and he could certainly dribble

and pass the ball as well as. But when you're bigger, you're able to get the ball to people a little easier; Jason does, because he's bigger than a lot of the guards he's playing against. But this kid was awfully quick and real smart, never threw the ball away.

Lage: Is he part of the Michigan State players group that continues to have reunions?

Newell: Yes, oh yes.

Lage: Was that that final year's team, or a whole--

Newell: No, all of them. The guys from all these different teams when I was coaching there. As I say, they continue to meet, and they'll meet again next year, and I just got a query about the best dates for me.

Lage: And they didn't have a unifying event like winning the NCAA?

Newell: No, none of that. No, but what they did, we really stabilized the program. I helped my good friend get the job when I left, Forrdy Anderson, and I left a really good program, because now I'd had the four years, and I had a real good freshman team coming up. I had just graduated my dead class. So Forrdy took some of those kids from my last team, the sophomores, and he went to the Final Four [NCAA tournament] a couple of years later.

Preventing the Fast Break with a Balanced Offense

Lage: Did you pick up any new offensive approaches from the Big Ten?

Newell: Yes. Oh, yes. I used to use basically a weave and a reverse action. Then I picked up diagonal, which became a very, very important part of our offense against certain kind of defenses. And then from that, we had a lot of different offenses--we had a five-man weave offense, same pattern; we went to double screens, quick double screens. It was a motion that really, I think, just gave my offense a real balance which I didn't have when I first went there. And then I learned a lot from the quickness of their game there, the way that they would break, and some of their transition ideas.

Lage: This is in the Big Ten as a whole?

Newell: Yes. And then they picked up a lot of our defense, and also reverse action. John [Benington] was telling me when he was in the Big Ten that at least six of the teams were playing some form of reverse action.

Lage: So that was really a permanent contribution.

Newell: Yes, so that made me feel good, that the theory that I was taught and tried to teach stood the test there, and we were so sound defensively, teams never could fast break us.

See, one of the things in the basketball that Jimmy taught us, and something that even today I lecture on--and as simple as it is, and the sense that it makes, still coaches don't really seem to understand it. Basketball is a game where the transition from offense to defense is right now. Jimmy felt, and I certainly feel, and from him I learned it was even more important than he made it seem, and that was that at the end of your shot, you must have court balance. This is basic to the idea that your offense should complement your defense. Because if your offense ends up with four people on one side of the court, and the shot is missed, you're in no position to defend the transition, because you're not in a good, balanced defensive retreat position in your transition from offense to defense.

The perfect position is the triangle on the board and your two guards on each side of the foul-line circle twenty feet from the basket, kind of a two-on-two kind of a situation. That is where you theoretically should end up after a shot. Very, very few coaches today even recognize that such a thing should have their attention. Today it is even more important as the threat of the three point shot demands good transition defense that can pick up the ball quickly.

Lage: So the balanced offense is not widely followed at the present time?

Newell: No, no, because it requires a flexibility of thinking, offensive thinking, that I don't really find in the game today. Flexibility in the sense that--today you play a system. The system produces your offensive shot. When you play defense, you start your defense over the middle line, basically. You don't say that, but that's where you start it, where they start it in most instances.

My contention is, as soon as the other team gets the ball, you're on defense. That's logical: you're not in offense if they've got the ball. So you should be in a position of being able to put a pressure on the ball, not steal it, but to occupy the ball. And when I speak at clinics, and I speak of how offense should complement your defense, I use football as an example. To complement your defense, you have to end up in a triangle, and the idea of a triangle is you've got the three points of rebound, recovery, covered.

Pete's X's and O's

X2 Plays rebounder

X5 closer look to (4)

X3 retreats immediately to basket but picks up opponent if no shooting come up ball side

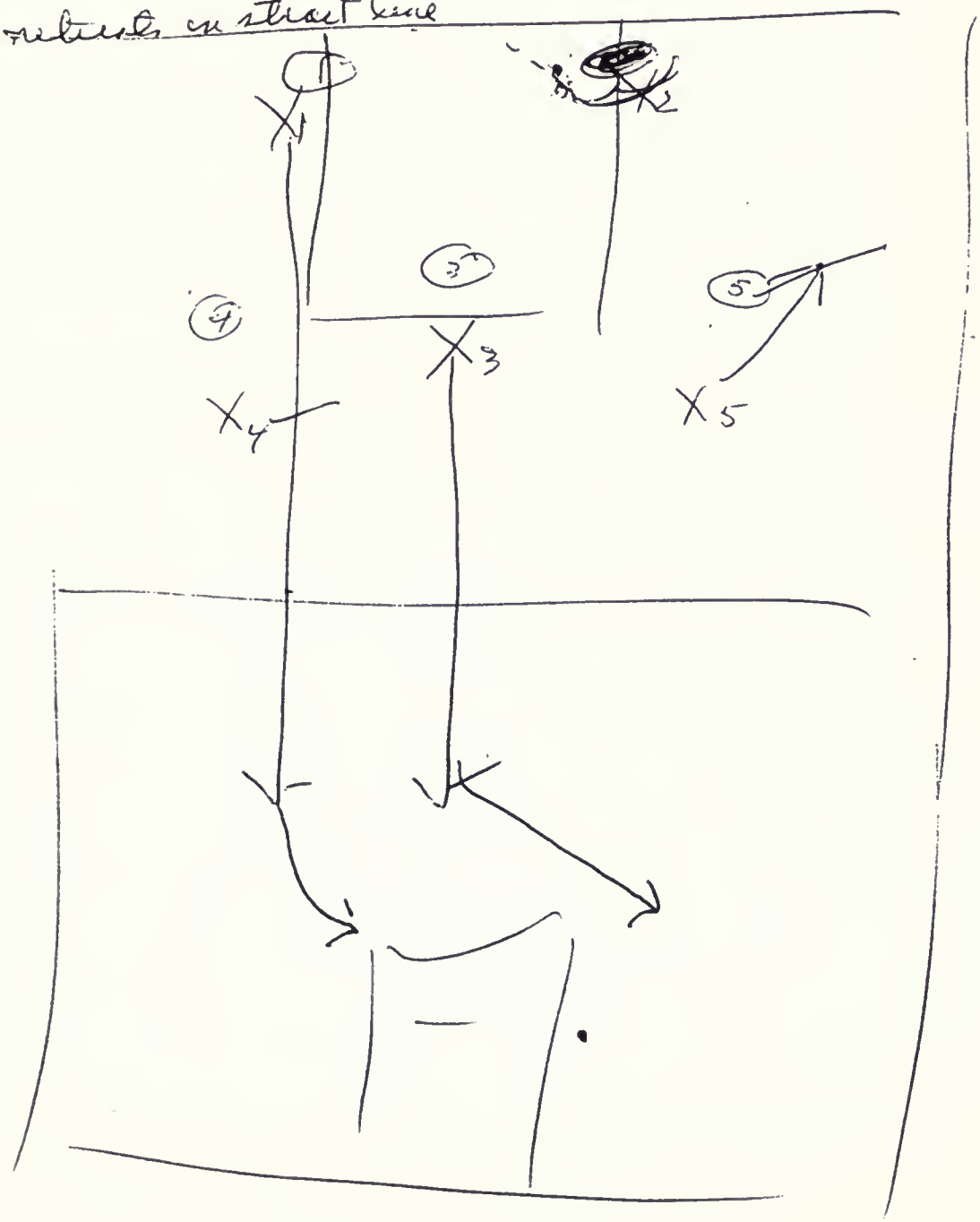
X4 plays (4) close

X1 retreats on strong side

O Offense

X Defense

rebounder



You go to a football game, you'll see one team up twenty-eight to seven, and they've done a real good job of pressuring the passer and putting the good rush on him and sacking him and all that. And now they go to a prevent defense. Now, they've got a passer that hadn't been able to complete anything because of the defensive pressure, when they turn to the no-pressure prevent defense, bang, bang, he's going right up the field. And why? Well, because there's no longer any pressure on the ball. They've allowed the man with the ball to do what he wants. They're going to have more defenders than there are receivers, but we know that all that does is make them complete shorter passes, but they still complete them, and they still go up the field.

But, to go back to basketball, by having a triangle on the board, now you've got pressure on the ball. You can beat the ball thrown going up the court, if they're trying to break. But if they're going to be throwing passes against pressure, your chances of interception or deflection are much greater. And we know that in football. It's the greatest example of the need to put a pressure on the ball in basketball.

But how do you put a pressure on the ball? You put a pressure on the ball by being balanced after your shot.

Lage: So even as you're completing your offense, you're thinking about--

Newell: Defense, yes. It is not like baseball and football, where there's a time element between your offense and your defense, one team comes off the field, the other team goes on. In baseball, your offensive team comes off and defensive team goes on. Not in basketball; it's bang, right now. So to me, it isn't even logical to say, "Well, my defense starts over the middle line." Because that ball can come up the court a lot faster than anybody can run, and if you're not balanced after your shot, then you're retreating on defense, there's no way you're going to consistently stop the ball.

And that is one reason teams were never able to fast break us, because we always had a pressure on the ball. One of the things we always tried to do is pressure the rebounder from the outside. Don't let the man with the ball make a turn and look up. You're not stealing the ball; what you're trying to do is, as he gets the ball, not let him be able to make a turn so he can see the whole court. And if he wants to throw the ball with his back to the receiver, you'll take your chances on interception. The other players all have assigned responsibilities. [see sketch, opposite page]

We never used our guards as our safety men. They were always choking the leads to their men, and the safety man was the guy at the foul line, unless he was the one that pressured the rebounder. If the ball came

that way, then he'd pressure the rebounder and the two inside men of the triangle to get back full speed in straight lines.

See, if you're playing somebody like Cal right now, that would be awfully important, because the most dangerous play that Cal has is a long rebound where Jason Kidd gets the ball. When he gets a rebound like that, he just makes everybody a threat out there, because he's gone, right now. By having a man at the foul line, you are ready for those rebounds.

I don't know how I got off on that.

Lage: We were talking about what you learned in the Big Ten and brought to Cal.

Newell: Oh, yes. But I learned that they couldn't fast-break us.

Lage: The correct defense could prevent the fast break?

Newell: Yes. Out in the West here, we didn't have teams really running the fast break that much, so I hadn't been really that sure that my system would work.

A Game of Counters

Newell: And I'm a great one, as you've probably learned by now, that if the other team is doing something that is beating what we're doing, I want to be able to counter it and try to figure out what the counter is. Because there is a counter to it, and the challenge is trying to find the key all the time. Yes, there's a counter to everything, and then you anticipate where they're countering you, and so you're always thinking ahead, too, if they counter you, this or this or this would possibly be your counter to them. That's the simpler part of the game. But it's those simple things that really count in teaching basketball.

Lage: They get overlooked, it sounds like.

Newell: Yes, detail, attention to detail is so, so important. Little things are the things you take care of, and then they don't become big. But if you allow slippage, a little slippage, pretty soon you have big slippage. So I always was--just the smallest thing, I really wanted my players to respect, even if it was just the position of a foot.

Lage: Yes. Now, is it true that at USF you drew footsteps on the floor of the court, and the players had to go in those footsteps?

Newell: No, I don't remember that. At USF, I don't remember that, but it could have been. When you're a young coach, you don't know much, but you don't know you don't know much, as I told you. But what you do know, you're almost dogmatic about.

Lage: You're not as flexible until you get more experience?

Newell: Oh, no. The more you learn, the more flexible you become, because you realize there's so much more to learn out there. But, as I say, when you don't know much, you think what you do know, that's it. So you're dogmatic: "This is the only way to do it." When I think of those early years I was coaching, people--the media and supporters--were more tolerant.

People were in a tolerant mood. My offense was very limited, unimaginative and, frankly, dull. But it was fundamentally sound. I realized I needed to expand it but only in the context of what I knew and could be comfortable with. A coach should always know what he coaches and coach what he knows. As the years went by, I did expand it and tried to be creative offensively. I believe my reverse-action formation was the soundest, most productive formation in the game's history. It produced a great variety of shots but gave us the triangle of rebound that no other system has ever produced. It was the reason we were so fundamentally sound defensively against the fast break and transition offense.

Pete and Florence Newell, January 1961.

V COACHING BASKETBALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, 1954-1960

Flashback: Meeting Florence O'Connor

Lage: Last night I was thinking about our long interview yesterday. You know what we missed? You had been talking about how you never had time for any dates in school, and then the next thing I knew, you were getting married. Tell me a little bit about where you met Florence.

Newell: Yes, I had been talking about high school, and college, too. But I met Florence, well, just about 1939. She was not going steady, but one of my friends, Tom Murphy, was dating her. I met her through him, but he was also dating another gal. So they weren't going steady or anything; it was just, you know, going to dances or something like that. That's where I met her.

Then we started to go together, for about a year, 1940. Then the war came, and we decided, like a lot of couples did then, that we'd get married early, rather than waiting. You never knew how long the war was going to last, where you were going to go, and we just decided. She came back early in 1942 to Chicago, because I was in the navy then. I was in the navy, and I was back there long enough to know that I had some permanence there for a while, maybe six months.

She came back there. She worked for the Treasury Department in L.A., so she was transferred there. She was able to work there while I was at Great Lakes. We lived in Chicago, the north side of Chicago.

Lage: And she was an L.A. girl?

Newell: She was an L.A. girl, oh, yes. She went to Conaty. She never went to college; right after high school, she went to work.

Lage: Was she from an Irish family? How many brothers and sisters?

Newell: She was pure Irish, with one brother, Tom.

Lage: Was she a sports enthusiast before she met you?

Newell: Well--[laughter]

Lage: It certainly became part of her life.

Newell: To be honest with you, the first time I met her--Tommy used to come to Loyola to see us play basketball, and I was his close friend, so I was a guy that he was going to go see play. Believe it or not, both times he came late with her to the game and both times I had already fouled out. [laughter] Honest-to-God. She didn't really know me, but--

Lage: She thought she was going to see you play!

Newell: Yes. She said, "Are you sure he plays?" [laughter] "Because every time we come, all he's doing is sitting." Well, I had played, but in those days, you only had four fouls. That was one of the reasons I fouled out so quickly. But those were the two quickest games I ever fouled out of, and it was both the games she went to see. Tommy got lost one time going to the game, and he was late the other time. But at both of them, he was there in the first half, and I had already fouled out by halftime.

Lage: You must have been sympathetic with your players who fouled out.

Newell: Well, later you could get five fouls before fouling out. I took my players out when they got three fouls and kept them for the second half so they wouldn't go through the same trauma I went through trying to explain that, "I did play, but you just came there late, that's all."

The Life of a Coach's Wife

Lage: I'm sure we're going to talk more about Florence, because people I've talked to say how important she was to the team.

Newell: Oh, she was, tremendously. In every aspect--the team, and life with her. A coach's wife has to be kind of a special appointed person I think, because the life she lives is a tough life in a lot of ways. She's living with a mentally unbalanced person, especially during the season.

Lage: Now, when you say that, I know you're being partly facetious, but is it the emotional ups and downs that you're talking about?

Newell: Oh, yes. It's a lot of emotion, a lot of trauma. As I told you, if you see this picture, Blue Chips, you'll see Nick [Nolte, who plays the role of coach] going through some of the internal battles that you have as a coach, within yourself. And it's a mood kind of a thing. Some coaches are able to let it all go out during the game. They get up and they rant and they rave, and they're right on the edge all the time of a technical foul, but they manage to get all of this out, and not get many technicals. I just didn't. I just kind of suffered in silence, and I guess with my towel--that was my savior.

Lage: The towel!

Newell: Yes, the towel. I guess it was my crutch. I could damn the official, plead to the Higher Up, etc., in that towel, but no one knew what I said but me.

Lage: But did it make you kind of withdrawn at home?

Newell: No. I think sometimes, when you're home, you wouldn't go on a tirade or anything, but there are times when you're on edge. There's a tension, and it's something that you don't like. Florence was always conscious of that and made sure that the kids were playing and were not going to create a problem for me by making a lot of noise or that kind of a thing, I guess. I was maybe kind of moody, but I just know that she had a great understanding of me and of my inside battle of trying to cope with pressure and be able to not let it affect me. And it didn't. I didn't go into any kind of tirades or anything like that. But as I say, I would kind of suffer in silence.

Lage: She knew the emotion.

Newell: Yes. And sometimes you don't say anything for a long time. The game is going in your head, and you go home, and you play the game over in your head, and over. Some wives don't understand that it had nothing to do with her, it had nothing to do with the family, it had nothing to do with anything, but the business you're in, the profession you're in. She understood that, and most coaches' wives do understand that. The ones that want to force conversation or want to analyze the game when you don't even want to talk about the game, those are the ones that have problems being a coach's

wife, I think. Those are the times when you want to forget the game and just get it out of your mind, and worry about that tomorrow.

Another thing that makes a coach's wife so tough is it's kind of a gypsy existence.

Lage: Yes, I was thinking that too, the moving to Michigan and back to Cal.

Newell: Yes. And every time we made a move, she was totally for it. Any move you make, the wife has got most all the adjustments. You're moving from one set of friends and acquaintances and whatnot to another, but doing the same things. But she's got to get the kids in new schools, she's got to cope with, "They don't like me," and all the things that happen with kids when they go to a new school. Some adjust in a hurry and some don't.

Lage: And then making new friends for her.

Newell: Sure. But she was real good at that. She was very, very congenial and friendly, and at Berkeley most of her friends were faculty wives.

Leaving Michigan State for Berkeley

Lage: Let's talk about coming to Berkeley: how you happened to come to Berkeley, who recruited you to come, and what you found when you got there. That's three questions!

Newell: Okay. The first question: Florence and I were having dinner with a couple, he was a graduate of Michigan State, and he was a very famous young boxer. Chuck Davey was his name, and he was at Michigan State. I knew him, my offices used to be right near the boxing room. I got to know Chuck, went to see him fight a number of times. He was only in the fight game about three or four years.

But anyway, we were having dinner. I got this phone call at this restaurant, somebody needed to get hold of me. It was Brutus Hamilton. Brutus told me that Nibs [Price] was retiring. I knew that he was retiring, but I thought that they'd pick a Cal guy, because they always had.

Lage: Did you know Brutus?

Newell: Oh, yes. I had met him. I didn't really know him, but I had met him because I had been at USF, and I had gone to a couple of Pacific Coast Conference

meetings. We used to play the schools--in those days, there wasn't any conference like USF is in now, but we always went to the meetings, so we could find out any of the changes, because we always adhered to the PCC [Pacific Coast Conference] rules. If we didn't, they wouldn't play us, and I wouldn't want to lose that association and competition.

Lage: And you knew Nibs Price from all--

Newell: I knew Nibs because we played against him when I was at USF. Nibs was a very, very close friend of Sam Barry; he and Sam were very, very close. So that was helpful. But Nibs, I'm sure he would have preferred to see one of his Cal guys, and I would have in the same situation, I'm sure. But he was never opposed to my appointment, and Sam Barry was a very good and helpful friend of mine.

But anyway, I got this call, and Brutus said, "I'm just finding out if you are interested." I said, "Well, I'm interested," because it was Berkeley, my brother had gone there, and you know, Cal was Cal. I said, "I'm very, very happy here." And I was. They were really great to me there. But I said, "California is California; Michigan is Michigan. I'm at dinner now; I wouldn't even think of any kind of a change without talking with Florence." He said, "Well, I understand that, but I just wanted to find out if you had an interest. I'll get back in touch with you in a couple of days."

So we talked, and she was all for it.

Lage: She liked the idea of getting back?

Newell: Oh, yes, going back to California. Because her folks were still living down in L.A. But that's what I was saying, that when we went to Michigan, she was all for it, even though, as I say, a lot of women--"Oh, I've got to do this? I've got to do all the packing," which always ends up that way. You've got to get to the job, and the stuff isn't going to get there by itself. So anyway, she did, and she was for it. But she liked Michigan State, too. It was a good situation, because we were in a place where we were very, very happy and had some wonderful friends.

Lage: And the university gave you a lot of support.

Newell: Oh, the president was great. The president really liked the way our team played, and the kind of kids I had. He would go out of his way to show his support. And he was a brilliant man.

Lage: What was his name?

Newell: John Hannah. He was very, very big in agriculture. He had a lot to do with some of those programs that our country had, the Marshall Plan, and some of those programs, and was appointed head of one of the big federal programs by Eisenhower, in 1950, I think. So that made it really good, to have a president like that. Then when I told him I was leaving, he offered me a full professorship. I was an associate professor, and I'd have been a full professor if I'd stayed. I was already making I think as much or more money than any coach in the league, and he offered even more money. It was not an entirely easy decision.

Lage: You took such a cut.

Newell: I took a big cut. You know, but it's a funny thing. In my life, I've never made a decision, I've never done anything for the dollar value of it. Like teaching these NBA players at Big Man Camp. I never took any money, never charged them. Then when it became big, where we had to have a charge, I turned it over to Kermit Washington and Stu Lantz. I told them they have to charge, because now it was becoming expensive. You had to rent gymnasiums now; it had become pretty big. You had to have a conditioning coach, and we had to have a trainer, and insurance for players.

And the longer I live, the more right I know I am, that money is one of the least important, other than for your necessities and some of your basic comforts. It probably causes more problems than it resolves.

Lage: You've seen people with it.

Newell: Oh, I've seen people with it, and I've seen people not handle it well, and I've seen people so caught up in how much they have, and the material things, and all that, and they base decisions on that. I tell the players, "There are three important parts of your life you have to recognize. The first is the early part, when you're going out into business or profession or whatever. You base a decision first on opportunity. The middle part of your life, you may make a decision then on a financial basis, because your family is larger, normally, and your expenses are greater, and you have to think more of the economic benefits of the change. Then the third part of your life is security. Your principal thought should be the security of the job, not opportunity at that point of your life, or not money, with the risk of losing security, but security. But early on you don't want to pick a job on the security of it, nor just the money. It's the opportunity to establish yourself that is important.

It's like buying a house, I guess. The first house you buy is just to give you enough equity so you can get the next one. You don't want to--or should never think, "Hey, I'm going to live in a palace to start with," because it doesn't work that way. And I've always felt that way. But I left

jobs; even when I left Cal, I really didn't have a job. I really didn't. But it was just time to move on, and I wanted to get into something else. I didn't know exactly what, but I just felt it was time to move on. It had been a trying time there during those years, because of Mario Savio and those Free Speech people.

Lage: Yes. I want to hold off on that and talk about the Free Speech Movement later. But tell me, what did you see as the opportunity at Cal? Why did you pick Cal?

Newell: Well, it was the Bay Area, number one. I love the Bay Area and my years at San Francisco were great. I had a great respect for Cal because my brother had gone there. He'd taken me up there when I was just a young kid one time with him, and I'd never forgotten it. And of course, when I was at USF, I played them in baseball and basketball, and there just was a respect for Cal that not too many universities have with people.

Lage: So to be a part of that program was--

Newell: Yes, that was part of it. And coming back to California, I lived here all my life, and it's a lot different living than in the Middle West. Some Middle West people have a hard time in California because they like the change of seasons and all that. But you grow up on this, you enjoy this, you don't like to have to put on five coats and three sweaters and overshoes and mufflers.

Lage: Shovel the walk--

Newell: Yes. So I really didn't like the weather back there. I loved the school and the people and all, but the weather was not my cup of tea.

Lage: Did you get much indication about the kind of support you might receive at Cal?

Newell: I knew it was going to be tough.

Lage: You did?

Newell: Oh, sure, because Andy Wolfe was a famous player, a great player at Cal, and he was going to law school, but he was an assistant to Nibs. And if they were going to stay with a Cal guy, he was the logical guy to turn the team over to. I don't know; I really don't remember if he was that interested in it or not, in the head job.

Lage: But he wouldn't have had anywhere near the background that you came with.

Newell: No, he wouldn't have. He was preparing for a law career.

Lage: So somebody must have wanted a good coach.

Newell: Well, I tell you, the media helped on it, because I had a lot of friends in the media when I was at USF. We had won the first championship, first team to ever go to the NIT, and then we won it, and God, we even had a parade down Market Street. That's how big it was.

Lage: But did Brutus Hamilton or anyone else that you talked with indicate that they were hoping you would build this program up?

Newell: No, not really. I think Brutus talked to a lot of people. Brutus was very, very well respected and known, and I think he talked to a lot of people. I think he was interested in a coach like he was, that played within the rules, and was a teacher, and had shown that he could win. I think the Michigan State experience was good, because I took that program and, as I say, the first game MSU ever played in Big Ten competition; my basketball team played Northwestern in Chicago, at Northwestern-Evanston. That was the first competition that they'd ever had in the Big Ten. So my record as a coach looked good, because I'd built the San Francisco program and then I'd built the Michigan State program.

Lage: I guess I'm not questioning why they picked you, but I'm questioning what indication you had that they would support the kind of team that you would hope to build.

Newell: That didn't bother me a bit. If I was bothered by something like that--. If I had to depend on these Sam Gilbert-type of alumni,[1] then it probably would have bothered me. But when I went to Michigan State I wasn't bothered, and I had a much more difficult task there. I didn't know anyone. Nobody knew me there to speak of, and I was taking, as I say, just a shell of a program. But I knew that I was going to have to prove myself to Cal people. They wanted one of their people out of the alumni; they wanted a Cal guy.

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[1]See Chapter VIII.

Building the Cal Team: From the Cellar to the Top in Four Years

Newell: It didn't help the first year I was one and eleven, you know.

Lage: [laughs] I'd forgotten that.

Newell: Yes, and I was one and eleven. But it's a funny thing, that team, they were sophomores and they had to face seasoned veterans at Stanford, USC, and UCLA.

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Newell: Stanford had the best team they had since--well, probably that '50-'51 team was second-best team they ever had. The best team was obviously their NCAA championship team, which was back about 1940.

Lage: So you had young players, and you were facing a strong conference. That's the reason for the one-and-eleven record?

Newell: Yes. We were facing UCLA for instance. They had five starters that I think all were in their fourth year; all had played in the program for four years. They were all seniors, really good team. And SC had made the Final Four the previous year. All their key players were returning. They were a real good team, yet they didn't even win the conference. I think they came in third, and they had the same team that went to the Final Four.

Lage: So do you hear a lot of grumbling when you're one and eleven the first year, or do you just--?

Newell: Florence probably heard a lot more. I was impervious to that. I never allowed myself to be concerned with other people's opinions of what we did or we didn't do. I was my own worst critic, and I felt that if what I was doing was satisfying myself and the team, I didn't care what they wrote, I didn't care what some alums said. There was a guy or two that, a friend would say, "Boy, I don't know why they didn't let Nibs keep coaching, why they're bringing in this guy," or something like that. Well, hey. I expected that. When you're one and eleven, they're not going to put any wreaths at your feet.

Lage: Had Nibs run a very different program from you?

Newell: Yes, I'd say so. I was probably a little more regimented, and my team was probably a little more fundamental in terms of ball care and things like that. But Nibs was a very good motivator, and he was a tremendous man, a great,

great guy. He was my best supporter. When I think back, probably that more than anything else allowed me to do what I felt our team had to do, and not to feel pressure, because he was so supportive. I said at the time, and I've said many, many times since, that a lot of the success we had at Cal was due to his support, because that first team I had, I told them, "They're whacking us now, but when we're seniors, we're going to win this conference." And we did. When they were seniors, we won, and we won for the next four years. We never got down, we learned from every loss, and we just got better.

Lage: How do you go about building a team like that, four years from bottom to the top in the conference?

Newell: Well, you do it through defense, to begin with. Defense is the "we" of the basketball, it's the "us." Offense is more "me," "I." So you really concentrate on a team aspect of it, of really getting the players to focus in on--how should I put it?--how we're doing, not how I'm doing.

Lage: Is that just by the way you speak with them, or how do you build that sense?

Newell: In how you speak with them, as a group and individually, but mainly as a group. Because it's "we," we talk about we, us. And certainly when you lose a game, it's we, us. You never, ever allow any player to say, "I lost the game." He may have made a play that looks like he lost it, because it was the deciding basket or something, but if you look over the game, you could probably find there were twenty-five other instances where you missed a shot or you gave them an easy shot.

But it was a building year, and when you have that kind of a year, that kind of a team, you're more patient. I believe you should be more patient and more supportive, less demanding, and try to do probably fewer things so that you master them, and then you go on to the next things. If you try to do too many things, confusion sets in and they don't learn any of the things at the level you want. We didn't do a lot of things, but what we did, we did well.

President Sproul's Ill-Timed Locker Room Visit

Newell: Bob McKeen was our captain, and he was a great player and a great scorer. We seldom got buried by anybody. [laughs] I'll never forget: we had Stanford down about eleven points one time at halftime that year, and we

were playing at Cal. Stanford had this really strong team. They almost beat UCLA in the conference race that year. Bob Sproul [University President Robert Gordon Sproul] came in at halftime. And I didn't know that he came in, which was really a no-no for me, because nobody comes in at halftime but me and my coaches.

He was so great a guy. God, you talk about Mr. California. There was no one any more Mr. California than Bob Sproul. He had a resonant, deep voice, and "How proud we are again--" this is the last game of the year. And all we're trying to do is knock Stanford on their butt. [laughing] He went on an oratory but I never did get a chance to talk to the team. When he finished the halftime was over, and it was time to go out.

Lage: So he came sort of uninvited into the locker room?

Newell: Yes, more or less. [laughter] Just kind of burst in there. He was so exuberant, we were playing so well, and, "Guys, keep it up." He went out, and they're still waiting for me to tell them what mistakes we made in the first half, but I didn't have time so we go out and get beat the second half.

The only game we won that year, we actually beat SC, and I think we jobbed them to do it. I think that we made the basket, we were one down, and Bob McKeen threw one up. I really think it was late.

Lage: They called it on time?

Newell: Yes. They said it was a good shot. Twogie was great.

Lage: Who was great?

Newell: Twogie [Forrest Twogood] was the USC coach. Right after the game, I said to him, "Twogie, I think I stole one from you." [laughs] He said, "Well, you need it, Pete. You need it, Pete." [laughter] He said, "Maybe I'll steal one from you down the road." But that's the way it was then, it really was. It was a real questionable call. We'd be competitive, but we weren't that big, and we just weren't that talented at the time. And certainly not experienced enough. But we competed, we competed like the devil.

Lage: Did you have other contact with Bob Sproul?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure. He was--did you know him?

Lage: No, but I've heard a lot of stories.

Newell: Oh. You never met him? You never heard that voice?

Lage: No, I've just heard about the voice.

Newell: God, he loved to sing "Hail to California."

Lage: So would he come to the games?

Newell: Oh, yes, he was always at the games. And not only that, but any time they would play any of the Cal songs, you could hear him all over the place. He had a great voice. I'll tell you right now, if he was living right now, he'd just be upset like the devil at UCLA stealing all Cal's songs. I don't know how Cal ever let them do that, but they did.

Lage: Now they have all the songs.

Newell: All of our songs, yes. And they tried to do that when I was athletic director. I called Kelly James [UCLA band director], I said, "You knock it off. Those are not your songs." "Sons of California" I think was the first one--yes, that's the first one. I said, "That's a song written by a Cal guy for Cal. You go play "By the Old Pacific Rolling Waters," that's your song. Remember that song? [laughter] Terrible song. And he was a Cal graduate, that Kelly James.

Then I called J. D. Morgan [UCLA athletic director]. I said, "J. D., I don't want to hear again another Cal song played by the UCLA people. Those are not university songs. Those are Berkeley songs. We wouldn't steal any goddamn song of yours, so we don't expect you to do that to us."

Lage: Did you put a stop to it for that time?

Newell: Yes.

Lage: I had thought it had gone on forever.

Newell: Oh, no. They never, except for one brief spell when I was athletic director--absolutely not. You'll find that they started playing those songs in the seventies, late seventies. I'm not exactly sure.

Lage: You'd think they could invent their own.

Newell: Yes. Gershwin even wrote the one, "Strike up the Band." That one used to be their other song. "By the Old Pacific Rolling Waters" and "Strike up the Band." Now with all that talent down there in Hollywood, you'd think somebody would get them some songs of their own.

Lage: Does it help the program, or help you as coach, when the president of the university gets involved?

Newell: I think it helps normally, sure. I think it gives a sense of support. There's always the feeling that the faculty or part of the faculty is very anti-athletic. The athletes feel it, and certainly the coaches feel it. Not all of them, because a lot of them are very, very supportive. When you get to presidents, you feel you need their support of the athletic program.

One of the people that was really, really supportive of our basketball team was [former Berkeley chancellor] Glenn Seaborg; he still is. We've often invited his wife, Helen, and him to our reunions. In fact, they had a surprise birthday party for me a couple of years ago at Bob Dalton's place. Glenn and his wife were there. He never misses one when he's in town.

Lage: Yes, he's a great supporter.

Newell: Before he was chancellor, he was our faculty advisor. He would travel sometimes with the basketball team.

Lage: What about [UC President] Clark Kerr? Did he show any support?

Newell: He was not too supportive. He was an academician.

Lage: Was he a negative factor, or just--?

Newell: Well, he was the chancellor when I came here. I got to know him then--

Lage: How would you get to know him, in what kind of setting?

Newell: I'd be invited to affairs when he was chancellor, that he'd invite Florence and me to. I was appointed on some of the committees dealing with the students, housing and things like that. I was on the housing committee in the mid fifties. I was on several committees. Then as time went on, I kind of got out of them, because I didn't have time. I was in baseball and basketball, and--

Lage: Did you get a professorial appointment at Cal, or do they not work it that way?

Newell: No. I was under the ASUC [Associated Students of the University of California]. The athletic department was a part of the ASUC.

Recruiting Black Players in the Fifties: the Impact of Housing Restrictions

Lage: I'm going to draw you back to 1954.

Newell: Okay. Now, let me tell you something really significant at this time. To compound my problems in my first year--I had a tremendous freshman team --I had three black players that were starters on that team, very good basketball players. In fact, the freshman team went undefeated for the year. Bob Albo was the coach, Dr. Albo was the coach, and in fact, also the baseball coach. He was undefeated in baseball also.

Lage: He coached baseball too?

Newell: The freshman baseball. He was in medical school. He was in premed or medical school. That year he coached for us. Cal had had one black player years before who was a football player [Walter Gordon, class of 1918]. That was the only black player that they said they'd ever had. We had some rednecks among the alumni, and you can imagine my predicament. I'm going one and eleven out there, and then I've got three black kids on my freshman team. Now, I'm not saying that it was a majority or even close, but there was--those that wanted to carp a little felt they had reason to. They felt, "Well, look it, he's bringing in all these black guys--." They never said that to me. They never said it outside of their own circle, but it would get back to me.

Lage: Had you recruited those players?

Newell: Sure.

Lage: It was your first year, but you had--

Newell: Sure, my first freshman team, yes. Earl Robinson was the top player in the area here. And we had to watch out for UCLA. See, UCLA was ahead of all the rest of us, because they gave black players opportunities way before Cal, Stanford, or the other schools did.

Lage: Did Cal just not look at the black players coming up?

Newell: First of all, when I was at USF, there were no black players playing in college around. There weren't many in high school. You'd see the high school game, and you wouldn't see any black players. You'd see maybe two or three. I think I only saw two black players playing in high school when I was at USF, as I recall. I used to go see the games, because they're played at Kezar [Stadium, in San Francisco].

Lage: The population of the Bay Area was changing.

Newell: That's right. The black workers that came to San Francisco during the war out at Hunter's Point [San Francisco neighborhood], who worked at Hunter's Point [Shipyard], had kids that were too young to be in high school. So there just weren't any black players that you would recruit, because there weren't any high school black players.

Lage: I see, so this was changing--

Newell: Now, in Oakland, there was. I don't know, we didn't--actually, in those days, you didn't recruit like you do now, although Phil Woolpert got Bill Russell from Oakland, and K.C. Jones was from Commerce High. But see, K.C. came later [1951]. About that time, then more and more and more of the young blacks were old enough to go to high school. But you've got to realize, these workers came out in '40, '41, '42, and so in '48, '49, they were just little kids. Maybe even with the families, they were eight, nine, ten, and a lot of them younger than that.

Lage: So how did you happen to recruit the three players?

Newell: Earl was from Berkeley. He wasn't going to go to Cal, because he felt there were a lot of problems. First of all, Cal never had dormitories.

Lage: They had Bowles Hall for the men.

Newell: Bowles Hall was it. The regents at that time didn't feel it was the responsibility of a school, which was unusual, but they felt it wasn't the responsibility of a school to provide housing. So they never had a housing program on their agenda. I'm talking about in the forties, '45 on. A lot of these other schools did start to understand this increasing population is going to demand more on-campus housing. Because I was on the housing committee when they started all this planning for all those dorms Cal would need. It became a priority item.

Lage: Were you on that committee because you were concerned about your athletes?

Newell: No, I was put on it for whatever reason. I was concerned. See, why weren't there more black athletes at Cal, as there were at UCLA? Well, first of all, because there were not a lot of black students--there were only fifty-eight black students, I think, or graduates. Because there weren't a lot of black males, a lot of black females didn't want to come, because there was no social life, to speak of. There was no place to stay. It was hard to get

housing, and that was one of the things when I was on the housing committee that we really, really got into.

These accredited houses, that's one of the things that I did a lot of inquiry about, how can you--and this is way before civil rights or anything like that--but how can you accredit any of these people in this off-campus housing, which Cal had to depend on so much then, and to an extent they do now, when they won't let a black student in?

Lage: This was private housing that catered to students, and the university accredited them?

Newell: Yes, they had to be accredited by the university. And if they weren't, the university would discourage the students from staying there.

Lage: So this was one of the things the housing committee--

Newell: Well, this is one of the things they addressed, and this is one of the things we slowly broke down. But my first year there, I had to work like the devil to help get housing. One kid, Earl, lived in Berkeley. So he stayed at home with his mother. But the other two kids, I had to find housing way off the campus, and that's what really bothered me, because they almost had to commute. So that was another reason for dormitories.

See, now UCLA had dormitories. UCLA had off-campus housing, it wasn't a problem. And as a result, oh, they had Jackie Robinson and those great black athletes, when other schools weren't providing at all for the black student. You could see to compete you had to have some kind of living facility available. The black athletes didn't like to go there because there weren't a lot of girls. Girls didn't want to go there because there weren't a lot of guys. So it was a self-defeating thing--

Lage: You need a core.

Newell: Yes. And it was something that had to be addressed. If you had housing, there'd have been more women students, there'd have been more men students that would have been much more apt to go there. Instead, they would go to UCLA, or they would go to other schools around. I didn't do it just for basketball, because it took a long time before Cal was really accepted by the black student; the university as an institution of learning was respected, but it wasn't respected for the way that it provided for the students. And as I say, this goes back to the regents' philosophy at that time, that "We're not responsible for the students."

Well, they changed that philosophy, fortunately, and as we got more facilities, we got more black athletes, and we were able to accommodate them on campus. But it was almost impossible to recruit a black athlete at Cal when you're competing with UCLA and these other schools that did have black athletes, because you couldn't say, "Hey, you're going to live in this dorm," or, "You can live here."

Finding Beds for Centers: "Recruiting" Darrall Imhoff

Newell: It was hard enough to get a white athlete a decent room off-campus. I had one, Swede Asplund--he played center for me. He was about six-eight, six-nine. He slept the first year--this lady was really funny. I call her Mrs. Nussbaum because she was exactly like that Fred Allen character, talked like her. I forget what her name was, but to me she was Mrs. Nussbaum and to all of our basketball players.

So anyway, I was telling her about this player. She lived right across from the Durant Hotel. I said, "He's too big, too long." "Well, I have an--apple crate."

So Swede slept that whole year with the apple crate for his feet, because the bed was only six feet long and he was six-eight.

Lage: So she put an apple crate at the end!

Newell: She had the apple crate. So now, Imhoff, when I get Imhoff a few years later--this was the kind of a recruiter I was, this is kind of a famous story. I get this call one day from this lady, and she said, "Is this Mr. Newell?" I said, "Yes, it is." She said, "I have a nephew that's coming up here to school. He's in the forestry department. I was supposed to get him a place to stay and I forgot, and I'm really at a loss for getting him a place to stay."

I said, "Ma'am, I'm in basketball, I'm not in housing. You've got to talk to housing." She said, "Well, I did talk to housing and they told me to call you." I said, "Why would they have you call me?" "Well, he's about six-nine." I said, "What?" [laughter] This is a true story. "About six-nine."

I said, "Where did he go to school?" "Alhambra." Well, at that time, Alhambra was a top basketball school. I said, "What is his name?" "Imhoff, Darrall Imhoff." Rene [Herrerias] was at the desk across from me, and I put my hand over the phone, "Look up Imhoff."

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Newell: We're looking at their box scores and can't find his name anywhere. So I said to the lady, "Are you sure he played at Alhambra?" "Oh, yeah, that's where they're from, Alhambra. He was on the team there. I don't know how much he played, but he's a tall lad, he's very tall." So I said, "Well, let me just see what I can do." He was not coming as a scholarship or anything. But six-nine guys, not many of them go to Cal, whether they're basketball players or not, and I sure can't let one slip away. So I said, "I'll see what I can do."

Well, Mrs. Nussbaum was the first one I thought of. She wasn't there; I couldn't contact her right then. So I said, "Well, let's call Bob Boyd." Bob Boyd was the Alhambra High coach then, later the USC coach. And, "Oh, yeah, he's a big old clumsy guy. He never has really played. As a junior he didn't play. He was going to play as a senior, except he broke his arm in a shower accident or something, and he couldn't play all year, so he's really never played. But he is six-nine. But I don't know, I don't see him playing at Cal." But at least we knew that he did play basketball, so that was a plus. So anyway, Darrall comes up, and--

Lage: Did you get him the housing?

Newell: Well, I took him to Mrs. Nussbaum, and Mrs. Nussbaum says, [in German accent] "Vell, I don't know. Vell, I've only got vone bed, and it's that small bed again." I said, "Well, do you still have your apple crate?" "Vell, yes, I've still got my apple crate." [laughter] She had forgotten about the apple crate. So I told Darrall, "Well, we've got a six-foot bed and an apple crate. That's about the best I can do for you." "That's fine," because he couldn't find a place anywhere, and that was right in the middle of the campus, it was great.

So he slept the first semester with the apple crate, and he pledged a fraternity and went into a fraternity at the semester's end.

Lage: How did you get him onto your team?

Newell: Well, he went out for freshman basketball.

Lage: He was interested?

Newell: Oh, yes. He was doing well, and then he got hurt. He busted his foot, got a stress fracture in the foot. He had slipped in the shower and broke his arm at Alhambra. That's why he didn't play in high school. He never lettered in high school and didn't play as a freshman at Cal. The first time he ever

scored in double figures in a basketball game was as a junior at Cal. He made All-American as a senior. He had made some All-American teams because we won the NCAA when he was a junior. That's how much he progressed.

Lage: Now, what did you see in Imhoff that made you put the effort into him?

Newell: First I saw his size, which we didn't have a lot at Cal. And he was very active, and he was surprisingly strong. He didn't look it, but he was. His father was an independent contractor, built houses, and his two boys worked every summer with him. They did all manual work--setting cement foundations, and carpentering, and carrying bags of cement and things like that--just physical work. And he became just unusually strong.

He never really developed a real accurate shot outside, because he hadn't played that much basketball. But he did develop a real good left hook, and he developed areas where he could shoot well. He was a good rebounder, and he was the best shot blocker in college basketball, I think his junior and senior year, particularly his senior year. We were awfully good on defense, and one of the reasons was him. We could aggressively play the ball, and he would pick up a lot of the mistakes of our other players when their man would drive in and try to get a shot over him. He was a real good shot blocker. I don't think there was a better one at that time. He wasn't as good as Russell, but nobody's been as good as Russell. He was second to Russell in that area, certainly, but he didn't play at the same time Russell played.

He was a very, very important and effective part, and a bright kid, and hard-working. He had a great work ethic; his dad had those two boys helping him, and he worked with his hands all of his life. He was a forestry major.

Recruiting Compatible Team Players

Lage: You didn't actively recruit Darrall Imhoff, but when you did recruit, what did you look for? Were you looking for what all the other coaches are looking for?

Newell: I looked for a player that I felt would be compatible with what I expected of a player, such as selflessness. I was never interested in the big scorers. You like to have a kid with quickness. Also a player who seemed to understand the game.

Lage: Would you interview them to get a sense of their character?

Newell: You try to go see them play and not only see them play, but also see films of them and get reports from coaches. It wasn't as thorough as it is now, and it wasn't intense. I only had one assistant at Cal. I always had a student assistant, but the coaching staffs now have about four assistants. They go out all over and they're recruiting. It's so much more intense and competitive now in recruiting than it ever was. We felt that we had the best product of all to sell, and that was Cal. An education at Cal was very, very important, very meaningful. It still is.

But things changed with the advent of professional basketball, although it was played as far back as the late forties, but not on such a major scale in terms of revenue and visibility and television and all that. Darrall played professional basketball, but he's the only one from all those players. Professional basketball was not a top priority of these Cal players. Al Buch was the captain of that '59 team, and he became president of a big tire company, sold out for jillions, I guess, and has been living in Europe. But he still stays close to the players. In fact, he'll be here for the reunion. He's never missed one.

Denny Fitzpatrick was president of Beverly Hills Federal, and he's been very successful in business, and he's had his ups and downs being in that money business, the savings and loan business. But he's a very bright guy, and he's been successful. He's had some things that didn't go good, but he's had a lot of things that--[laughing] he's been a millionaire and he hasn't been a millionaire, put it that way.

Lage: So these are guys that weren't going on with pro basketball.

Newell: Yes, they weren't. Bobby Dalton is president of a big insurance firm up there. Bill McClintock is a school administrator in San Jose. Stan Morrison is a basketball coach at San Jose [State University] and was the athletic director at Santa Barbara. Earl Shultz is a doctor, he's a radiologist. They've been coaches, and Ned [Averbuck], as I say, and Robbie [Earl Robinson], they're teachers at Laney [College, Oakland]. Jim Langley is the head pro at one of golf's most prestigious golf clubs, Cypress Golf course in Monterey. He has been head pro for twenty years or so. Another player, Bill Alexander, is a dentist.

All different kind of things. But they've all stayed and they all care about each other. Like I told you before, there's a sincere depth of feeling that they have for each other. From a coaching standpoint, it's about the greatest accolade you could ever have, to have your players still be so socially compatible and friendly and caring.

Lessons of Winning and Losing

Lage: I haven't talked to a lot of them, but I guess it's mainly Ned [Averbuck] who's told me, they carry a lot of your teachings with them into their lives.

Newell: I've always felt it's an extension of their education, and there are probably more important principles associated with athletics in terms of living a life than there are with any particular major that they have, medicine or law or anything else. You have your ups and you have your downs, and athletics should prepare you for the emotional adjustment of either. As a coach, that's one of the things that I always tried to stress, not just blithely, "There's another game tomorrow," but "That's done, and what can you learn from it?"

See, you learn a lot more from a losing game than you ever do from a winning game.

Lage: Is that because you fret over it more?

Newell: Well, because there are reasons that you lost the game, and so you search as to why. From those reasons, you hopefully minimize the next time some of the mistakes you made and reasons you had for losing. So those are the lessons you learn from defeat. You don't want to get a defeatist attitude, and when you get that, you're wondering how you're going to lose the game rather than how you're going to win it. But when you win, there aren't a lot of lessons to learn from winning, other than the confidence of it.

Lage: Do you analyze why you won the game? Is that helpful?

Newell: Well, yes, you analyze why you won it, but you don't have the same--what do I say--the same listening ear, understanding, because when you win, "Well, hey, we won. We made mistakes, but we won." So winning kind of compensates for the mistakes you made. You made the mistakes. It's different when you made the mistakes and you lost. So now you're listening, because you don't like to lose. You like to win.

Al Buch said something one time that was really almost profound. We were playing USC in his last year. SC was ahead of us six points at their place with about a minute, little over a minute to go, and we won the game. A series of things happened that were just almost unbelievable. It was almost like it was scripted. But we won the game.

And they didn't have the three-point shot then, so we had to make four baskets to win it. We made three to tie it, and then we won the

overtime. So after the game the media was in the dressing room. Al was the captain, and he was one of the first ones they talked to. They asked him, "Well, weren't you worried that you were losing, you were going to lose the game?"

Al said, "No, I never thought of losing it. I was just wondering how we were going to win it." Well, to me, that's just what you want to do. You don't ever lose--"How are we going to win it?" And even though it's a minute to go and we're down six and they have the ball--

Lage: SC had the ball?

Newell: SC had the ball. A little over a minute to go. But his whole point was, "I knew we were going to win it, I just didn't know how." That's a state of mind that you hope you can achieve. For a period of two years there, we won forty-four out of forty-five games.

Lage: No wonder he thought they were going to win.

Newell: Yes. We won the last sixteen of the year, one year, and then we won twenty-eight out of the next twenty-nine. We got beaten by USC, but we beat them three times that year; but one game they beat us.

Now, from a coaching standpoint, you try to give the impression that--you coach that way and you talk that way--

Lage: That you will win.

Newell: And you really believe that way, except that in the dark recesses of your mind back in here again, when you're all by yourself and they've gone out on the court, all these devils start to come at you from all these different directions. And it wasn't trying to keep a winning streak going, it wasn't that this is a life-or-death game. Your thoughts become negative, "what if they do this or do that?" That was my problem. Keep a positive image to the team and just prior to the game fight the devil in your mind.

Actually, the games that you're supposed to win are the hardest ones to live with. When you're playing a real tough game, or you're playing a team that's supposed to beat you, those are the games I used to love. Especially a team that's supposed to beat you. To plan your attack and your defense and anticipate what they're doing. Maybe you're going to do something just not revolutionary, but you're going to do something that you haven't done just to see what their response is, just to give them something to worry about. Those are the things that always intrigued me.

If you lose a lot, you lose. And that was that first year at Cal. I felt I did maybe the best coaching job I ever did at Cal that first year, because we never thought of losing. We lost, but we never lost because we had a defeatist attitude. We lost, and we all were on the same page as far as learning. "You better get us now, because they ain't going to get us down the road."

Lage: Because they knew they had a future.

Newell: Sure. And when we lost a game, we didn't go with our heads down; we lost it, and we made mistakes losing it. But as I said, that's how you improve. You improve from your mistakes.

Lage: I would just think it would be hard to keep instilling that in the team, loss after loss.

Newell: Normally, it was, but I had a remarkable bunch of guys. Some of them grew--one who wasn't a very good player as a sophomore, grew to be an All-American as a senior, Larry Friend. He got drafted by the New York Knicks when there were only about eight or nine teams in the NBA. I think he was a first-round draft choice, and until he hurt his knee he was playing a lot, which was a tremendous accolade for him.

Teaching a New System of Play and an Understanding of the Game

Newell: And see, they had another thing. They were learning a whole new system of play. The way we taught and played was altogether different than what Nibs did. There's a lot of different approaches in basketball. In those days, there were even more than there are today, because today you play basically three offenses. In those days, there were many different kinds of offenses. There was much more creativity in those days; there was much more offensive identification with the coach.

It was the same in football: you had the Pop Warner double wing and you had the Howard Jones power-off tackle, and you had the Jimmy Phelen spread, and you had Knute Rockne shift, and there was a creativity in the coaches then. And there was in basketball. You had post play, you had double post, you had many different kinds of offenses. Now, it's boiled down to principally motion offense or flex offense.

At Cal, I had really four different basic sets, because my philosophy of offense--and I've been consistent in all my years--is that it's a game of

counters. For instance, reverse action was our basic offense. But it wasn't an effective offense against a certain kind of defense. So when a team played this type defense, I had a set that could counter that. Against a normal or less aggressive defense, maybe even a passive defense, reverse action was a great movement.

Now, if the teams really want to come out and press you, and force you out of your normal spacing, we did other things. The more a team presses you, the more you want to go straight or diagonally to the hoop. The softer they are, the more lateral you go. I believed that when I first started coaching, and I believe it even more now. Well, motion offense is the same against either. Flex is the same against either.

I always felt in offense that you had to have counters for what the defense did. And counters, in terms of flexibility. In other words, we had counters, a lot of counters for reverse action. But there were certain defenses that gave us trouble when they overextended. But by the same token, if you overextended on us, we would hit you with these back doors, open sides, and diagonal cuts, because those are the answers for that kind of a defense; those are the counters. You came and you showed us that, and we would recognize it, because we spent a lot of time teaching that recognition, read-and-react. And they read this kind of a defense, because part-method teaching--I never had to yell anything or put any numbers up or anything like that.

Lage: You trained them enough that they could react?

Newell: Well, absolutely. We'd do that in practice. If they weren't ready to go out on the court and play the game themselves, I'd done a poor job. That's the way I felt.

Lage: So you didn't have to hold up cards with numbers?

Newell: No. We'd look at films, and we'd see the way they play, and that certain things would go better. But when the opposing team comes out and presses, I'm not yelling this or that; they knew. They recognized it, and their five minds are working as one. Well, we did all this in our part-method teaching. They could go out and play right now; they'd run the offense right now. In fact, they do it. They have a basketball game, and they play. They run the same sets. Somebody was saying a couple of reunions ago that they play better than the Cal team does right now. They were all in their forties at the time. But it was so ingrained in them.

But the flexibility was there. It was their choice. I'm not saying, "Run this, run that, run this." I expected them to recognize what the defense was

doing. I expected them to recognize a certain breakdown that the other team may have in vision or position or whatever.

The Oregon State Playoff Game, 1958: A Tribute to Read-and-React

Newell: Here's a perfect example of what I'm talking about: we tied Oregon State, Oregon State tied us, whatever way you want to call it, for the conference championship in '57-'58. We had a team of relatively small players. One player, George Sterling, was also a star baseball player. He was a forward, he was six-four. We had Bobby Dalton; he was six-two. We had a six-five-and-a-half center. That was our front line.

Their front line was seven-one, seven foot, and a six-nine player. Our guards were Robbie, who was maybe six-two, and Al Buch, who was about the same. Their two guards, one was about five-eleven, and the other played a wing, and he was about six-five, six-six. So they had a tremendous height advantage.

Well, we had to play a playoff game. We had to go up to Oregon to play it. I was real proud of this game. Oregon State played a very, very intelligent offense, because they had this big size, they spread their men real well, and they had this one five-ten guy who was really good. They had a big seven-footer that would stand right about the top of the circle, between the top of the circle and the foul line, and he'd screen for this guy. It's a tough switch situation, because you have here a center switching off, and your guard, who is maybe six-feet-two, has to switch from the five-ten guard to a seven-foot center.

So I only had one day to practice, a Sunday practice, and we had to go up there and play the game Monday, because the NCAA tournament started, and the winner would go to the NCAA. And they were favored to win the conference, and we weren't expected to. We had graduated so many guys from the year before when we won the conference, we weren't expected to win again. In fact, UCLA, Oregon State, and SC were all favored. But we had all these new kids, all from the JV team. All three of my front-line guys were from the JV team, played JV the year before. They hadn't played on the varsity.

So, we play the game. I had given them two ways to play this particular screen. The first way wasn't very good, and they don't get much out of it. They're starting to break us down, so we went to plan two. Plan

two wasn't any better. And there is a foul shot--and they're ahead of us about, oh, twelve to seven--I notice my players are all huddling out there.

We didn't huddle after foul shots or before, we didn't ever do that, but this time was unusual. They got together, the five of them, quickly in a very, very quick huddle, broke out of it. Next time they come down, my center and my guard both jump the ball and leave that big guy alone. But we jumped the ball, and the guy's not expecting it; we knock it loose and get a hoop.

To make a long story short, in about eight minutes, we're ahead about twelve, fourteen points. The team, because they understood the game, made these suggestions themselves. It was really George Sterling. Sterling says, "My guy is just standing out there, he's not doing a damn thing. So I'll pick up that center coming in," even though he was eight inches taller. Sterling was a big jumper, and he was very active. So that's what they did. They both jumped the ball, and this little guard couldn't get the ball to him.

When he did get to him, we intercepted it, and now we got them all screwed up. Now they're throwing the ball over to--they had an All-American forward by the name of Gamby, and they're giving the ball to him. Now, Gamby, he hadn't been touching the ball too much, and he's starting to force shots. So we end up winning the game by almost twenty points. It was a big, big upset to even win the game, let alone by twenty.

After the game the media hit me, "Boy, Coach, you really made some great adjustments out there. You just took them right out of what they were trying to do. Exactly what did you do?" I said, "Well, I'm really not sure, but as soon as I have a chance to meet with the team, I'm going to ask them, and we'll both know." [laughter] That's an honest-to-God fact, and they thought I was kidding. But I wasn't, and I wanted to find out who--and the team all kind of said the same: "Let's jump this guy. George, you can pick that guy up," and George, "Yeah, my guy's not doing nothing, he's just standing over there. And even if he gets the ball, he's not going to do anything when he gets it, I'll get back out on him."

Lage: So you taught them this same way of looking at the game?

Newell: Well, I taught them flexibility of defense. I didn't teach them to think, but I gave them the opportunity and the right to think, and to react, and to understand the game. I think that's one of the problems that my players have when they watch basketball today, I hear them all the time telling me, "Gee, Pete, they're so bad fundamentally. They don't understand." And their critiques are right, I agree with them. No, and I was real proud of that, because there was no reason at all that we beat that team in Oregon under

those conditions. Up front we weren't able to [matchup in height.] I had Dalton at six-two guarding that seven-footer under the basket, and they never did throw the ball to him. But when we jumped the ball like we did, the small guy couldn't see anybody. It's like the prevent defense I was telling you about. You let the quarterback look around and see the field, but when you really put a pressure on him, now he's throwing the ball blindly, and now they will intercept him. Now you really got them routed. So that game was really a tribute to that team.

A Problem Official: Losing to Seattle in 1958 NCAA Regionals

Newell: That team could have gone to the Final Four. It's the only game that I ever was involved in where I really felt the referee fixed the game.

Lage: Which one was this?

Newell: We played Seattle University in the NCAA regional tournament, and we got beaten in overtime. I just knew inwardly that--in fact, after the game, I was so upset, and I had never done it before and never did it after, I went into the dressing room and I directly told this official, "I think that you threw this game. I think you did some business on this game." That's a terrible thing to say.

Lage: Yes, that's a pretty strong accusation.

Newell: Yes. And I did believe it. And a funny thing--Charlie Harney, the big Bay Area contractor, and Jimmy Needles were outside the dressing room, and Jimmy said the same thing, "There's something funny about this game, Pete."

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Newell: When I went in there, I was so frustrated and so upset, not losing the game but to have my players be a victim. I didn't know for sure, but innately I felt, I just sensed that it was not kosher, that something happened.

Lage: What kinds of things occurred?

Newell: Well, we were ahead twelve points the first half. We had them under complete control. Elgin Baylor only made one basket, I think, the first half. George Sterling just did a tremendous job on him.

Lage: So you were playing against a pretty important player, one who turned out to be a Hall of Famer, Elgin Baylor.

Newell: Yes, and a team that had a lot of talent. It was a maverick team. They had guys that had flunked out of Notre Dame and Indiana. It was really not a very respected program, to be honest. It was a program of a bunch of mavericks from a lot of different places. But they were good players. They were players that were top athletes. But this coach was from the Middle West, and he gathered all these guys and brought them out there, and they let them in. I don't know how they got in; I know they didn't stay very long. But they were there that year.

We were ahead by twelve. We come out the second half, and in four minutes, they are shooting the penalty.

Lage: In four minutes?

Newell: In four minutes of play, yes. And Sterling was the one they really hit. They got him with three fouls, I don't think he had a foul the first half, because he was denying the ball to Baylor, and doing a real good job. But we end up with about twenty-five seconds to go, they're behind two points. We know they're going to go to Baylor, and we were a good defensive team. We weren't big, but we were good mentally and a good aggressive defensive team. We know they're going to Baylor, but they have fouled out Sterling by this time. We forced Baylor to take a terrible shot. He takes a shot from about thirty feet; it was an awful shot.

The ball came deep, and Earl Robinson got it, and he's going down unopposed for a lay-up. And we're up two points. If he'd have veered off and hadn't even shot the ball, we'd have won the game. But he's got almost a cinch two points, and as he goes up, this opponent kind of dives and pushes him from the rear. He's way behind him, and just as he goes up for the shot, he pushes him from the rear, an obvious intentional foul.

Earl misses his shot, and Dalton knocks it in. Then we hear the whistle from the one official who was all right. He calls it a two-shot intentional foul. And then this other official that wasn't all right (the bad guy) comes running in, and he calls it off. You can't argue the thing, you get a technical. But no explanation. And Earl was the captain. He's just losing his cool, when he called it a one-shot foul.

Lage: So he called off the intentional part.

Newell: He called off the intentional and called it a one-shot foul. It was only the third foul they had called on them the whole second half. They called

something like sixteen on us. We were ahead twelve points, so we weren't fouling.

So I called two time-outs to cool Earl down, because I'm afraid we're going to get a technical out of it. We should have had the ball and two foul shots. Earl finally shot, and he missed the shot. They got the rebound--

Lage: But you should have been ahead by four then.

Newell: We should have been ahead by four. But of course, the basket we made, they didn't count.

Lage: Oh, Dalton's basket didn't count, so you were ahead by two still.

Newell: Yes, Dalton's basket didn't count. But they didn't blow the whistle until after we made the shot. It was a real late whistle. It was almost like, "We're not going to call anything here," but they didn't take into account that Dalton was going to make the basket. So now they blow the whistle. Now the one official called it the intentional, he's going like that, puts up two fingers, and the other guy, who is the senior official, comes in.

Well, anyway. So we lose in overtime. We have fouled out Sterling, and we fouled out one other player. We didn't have that much depth anyway. So they went on to the Final Four. We would have gone on to the Final Four, and we could have won it with that team, even though we weren't very good individually. We were a tremendous team. We'd play a game, and we may not have but one turnover, two turnovers in the whole game. The next year, we only had one turnover in the regionals. In both games, one turnover.

Lage: That's incredible.

Newell: Yes, it was incredible.

Lage: Incredible discipline. [telephone interruption]. Okay, let's get back to officiating at the Seattle game. You hadn't finished telling me what happened in the dressing room afterwards.

Newell: Oh, Seattle--yes. I'm in the dressing room, and I'm so upset. It was at the Cow Palace, and there're big lockers there. I just wanted to hit something, and I hit the lockers. I knocked these lockers over, and they fell--they're tin--and they fell, and it was BANG! Charlie Harney says to Jimmy, "He shot the S.O.B." [laughter] Because they were really mad at this official.

Well, here's the upshot of it. This same official, either two or three years later, was indicted for throwing a football game in the AFL, the old AFL, down in San Diego. They'd been following him, and they'd been following him for some time. We got him out of basketball. He had been one of our top officials in NCAA games.

Lage: Had you suspected him in other cases? Or was this the only run-in you had?

Newell: No. I had suspected him, because at NCAA games he was always out late. He'd be working a game the next day and he'd be out--we'd be out drinking and talking, the coaches, but you don't expect the officials to be out. He'd be out after we went to bed, and we didn't go to bed too early. Because this is kind of a decompressing time, when you see coaches you haven't seen all year from different parts of the country, and it's kind of a meeting time, I guess.

But this guy would be out, and he was always congenial. He was a very friendly kind of a guy, not that that should make you suspicious, but it always made me a little leery about the guy, "What's he doing out at this time of night?" Because it showed a real lack of commitment to what his responsibility was, that game. Plus, if you're out like that, there's a tendency that you're going to--

Bob Dalton

[telephone rings; Newell is talking to a writer in Charlotte where NCAA will be held, who wants a story on the 1959 game; he asks Newell about team member Bob Dalton]

Newell: I used to call him the "Charles Atlas Before." [laughs] On a sunny day, you could see through him. He was the kind of a body you'd never buy. So anyway, and it was true, I used to tell him time and again the old cliché, "If you could buy yourself for what you're worth and sell yourself for what you think you're worth, we could both retire." And he'd always come back. He was always one step ahead of me.

But he was a very competitive guy, and that's why he was great--he was a great competitor, great competitor. Physically, he'd be the last guy you'd pick in a pick-up game, but his team would win the game, because that's the kind of player he was. He wasn't particularly quick-footed, but he was a terrific defensive player. He was a very aggressive guy, and he was a very smart player, and very smart--he was a very good student, too.

So he was a guy that you always--he'd get himself pumped up, especially for a challenge, like Oscar Robertson. In fact, you heard of the classic statement he made in the NCAA game. Yeah, that's the way he'd do it. [Introducing himself to Oscar Robertson, he said,] "My name is Dalton, what's yours?" And of course, Oscar's on the front of every magazine for two years, and hell, people in Timbuktu knew who he was. Here he's out playing the University of Cincinnati, and he puts his hand out, "My name is Dalton, what's yours?"

A year later at the Olympics over in Rome, Oscar said, "Hey, that guy knew what my name was, didn't he?" [laughter] So anyway, Dalton was a competitor. He was really a competitor. It overlooked some of the physical --he wasn't that big to be a forward, he's about, I guess six-two and a half was about as tall as he was. And as I say, if he had a muscle, he was still looking for it. [laughs] And he played Jerry [West], too. He played Jerry tough. But all year, I'd put him on the top guy, because he was great at denying the ball. He was deceptively quick, too. He didn't look like he was quick, but he was. He was an athlete in the sense that, like I say, he was a hell of a tennis player, and still is. He just did a lot of things. He was quarterback in football. But if you looked at him, as I say, he'd be the last guy you'd pick in a pick-up game.

[telephone question] Yes, he wasn't a scholarship guy in football, although he was one of the top quarterbacks in the area. And he wasn't in basketball. He was a walk-on as far as basketball was concerned, on the freshman team. I don't know whether he was ever on scholarship in basketball; I'm not sure he was. He may have been. [inaudible question] Well, I called him Thunderbird. He was the only guy I knew who was rich enough to own a car like that, and he had one. So that was his name, Thunderbird.

[telephone question] He was on the JV team, yes. He was on the JV team, and I used to let the JVs play against the first seven, eight guys, or the first ten guys, and then JVs--I had about twenty guys out there, and most of them were walk-ons. Joe Kapp was on his team. Mike White, you know the football coach--those guys were all on the same JV team. And Wednesday, I'd let them scrimmage the guys that were playing, the top ten varsity players. Without a smile, Dalton, on the JV team, would say, "Jeez, we gotta play these guys again? We beat them every damn Wednesday. What the hell you giving us--why don't you bring the team in?" And they beat my best guys, every Wednesday they beat them.

[telephone question] You know, he got drafted. He finally got drafted. I say finally--in those days, you only had eight or nine teams in the NBA, so if you got drafted--. He would have been a middle of the first round today.

Yes, I think he was drafted in the second round. He'd have been the middle of the first round with these twenty-nine teams we have now. I could hardly live with the guy when he got second round. He came in with the paper, and he threw it down on my desk, and he said, "Now, just take a look at this. I've been trying to tell you this for three years. Just take a look where I was drafted." Had no intention of ever even going to a camp, but it was such a thrill for him to be drafted like that.

[telephone question] Yes, yes. No, he's president of a big insurance company in San Francisco now. His dad was in insurance, and he's--they won't hold any benefits for him, I guarantee you that. But he's still the same. We have a reunion this year again, and he's a prime mover of it. He's one of two or three guys that starts it all, gets the place. We go to Quail Lodge in Carmel. So he's the guy that puts it all together.

[telephone question] Well, no, I can't think of any right at the moment, but he was a kind of a guy that wouldn't score a lot of points, but you'd like to have him take the clutch shot. He was that kind of a player. He was one of the original garbage men around the basket. All these big guys are up jumping, and here comes this skinny guy with the ball and gets it back in while those other guys are looking for it. That kind of a thing. I used to tell him, "You ought to sweep the gym, because your hands are always around the floor down there," because he was always picking up the loose ball. So anyway, he was that kind of a player, really a good defensive player, and a very smart player. Didn't turn the ball over and would make a good pass.

[telephone question] No, no, he was a wing. He was a forward. Yes.

[question] See, Oscar and Jerry were forwards in college.

[telephone question] Yes. Oh, yes. Well, he was offbeat, I guarantee you that. [laughs]

[question] We had--[laughing]--you know, he's been very successful. This is a true story: he's very successful in insurance, and I had a birthday. They had a big birthday party for me. He lives in a place called Blackhawk. That's where Jose Canseco bought that $3 million home, and he's got one of those places out there. It's really a palatial place.

And he even has valet out there for us when we come, to park our car. So he's standing out there in the front, so when I looked at the place, the first time I had seen it, I looked around and said, "Hey, Thunderbird. Why in the hell did you get in drugs and get out of the insurance business?" [laughing] His mouth just opened. It was the first time he didn't have a

comeback for me. But that's the truth, yes. And the rest of them said--oh, they said, "You really stopped him on that one." [end of phone conversation]

Lage: I recorded your phone conversation just now because I figured we'd be talking along those lines. Who is writing the story about Bob Dalton, and why were they writing it?

Newell: A newspaper writer, a sports writer in Charlotte. That's where the NCAA Final Four will be. He's reading through the NCAA archives, and coming to our [1959] game, he read about Bob Dalton.

Lage: So he wanted a little--

Newell: I really hope he does write a story on Dalton, so I can cut it out and send it to him. [flipping through outline pages] So let's keep pounding away.

Lage: Okay, we were finishing up with that Seattle game and the referee. Would you say--we don't know that he really was in somebody's pay, but would it have been gambling or would it have been--

Newell: Oh, it would have been gambling, sure. And there were officials who were in the gambling scandals of the late forties and early fifties, some officials were involved.

Lage: I didn't realize that the officials were in that.

Newell: Yes. Well, they kept it pretty quiet, but it's a fact.

Lage: It's probably a great temptation.

Newell: Well, they can control a game more than a player. And they can do it in such a way that you aren't sure. Because [laughs] they make some mistakes anyway; you don't know which are honest and which are dishonest. But that's the only game I was ever connected with that I never had any doubt, and I didn't have any proof, other than what you felt. I had seen this fellow before at the Final Four, and I had had my doubts then. So when this thing happened, I--and it wasn't that we lost the game. It was the fact that he took the game from the players, our players, who deserved to win it.

And not only that, but we were a school that abided by the rules, and we were students, and they had players that it was doubtful that they got in legitimately. They were transfers. Even Elgin was a transfer. Elgin was a transfer from Idaho State. There was a center from Notre Dame, and

another one from Indiana, Charlie Brown. It was really a renegade program, and to have that kind of a program be benefitted so much by partisan officiating was just almost inconceivable. Not that you expect--because your kids go to school and graduate, you don't expect the officials to take that into consideration. But on the other hand, you sure don't think it should be favoring a bunch of mavericks either, that have just been kind of gathered to light at this one place and represent them for a year, and that's about what happened.

Lage: Right. Semi-pro.

Newell: Yes. Well, it was. That's exactly what it was. I don't think any of them even played after that year.

The Team as a Family--Florence's Contributions

Lage: I want to talk a little bit about how you saw your relationship with the team. Some of them have described it as sort of a family. Did you feel that way?

Newell: Well, yes, and it was. Florence was a good part of that. Florence was really kind of the mother hen of the girlfriends and the wives. Very few of the players were married, but those that were married late--they were married in their junior or senior year. And she was really good at listening to them. She had a tremendous ability to listen, and she was the most voracious reader. So she was really knowledgeable, not just novels, but she would read--oh, a lot of the books up there you can see, they are the things that she read. She was way, way ahead of her time in terms of social issues, and black issues. She was very much ahead of that. She was--I'm way right of center, and, well, she wasn't way left of center, but she was more liberal than I was. But it was never a kind of a thing where she was going to try to pound her thinking into your head. It was never that. She didn't even want to argue it, but she would give an opinion.

And she was so great. Two coaches in basketball, two of the most irascible coaches, one was Bill Fitch, who was an NBA coach for many years for the Celtics, Houston Rockets, and for Cleveland Cavaliers, and for the Nets. And really a hard-nosed coach. But a good friend of mine, a very good friend of mine, and a guy that I understood pretty well. And Bobby Knight. They would call up, and I'd pick up the phone, and "Hey, Pete, how are you? Is Florence there?" This is an honest-to-God fact, they'd tell you that if they were sitting there. I'd say, "Yeah." I'd say, "Florence, Bobby, or Bill, wants to talk to you."

And they'd talk for an hour. "Okay, Bobby," or "Okay, Bill. Give me a call tomorrow, we'll discuss it some more," or something like that. And hang up the phone. I'd say, "Didn't they want to talk to me?" "No, no, there was something we'd been talking about."

Lage: So they would be unloading to her--?

Newell: They would be very comfortable--Bobby, if you ever talk to Bobby Knight about Florence Newell, he'll expound for fifteen minutes on her, about her ability to really be able to, no matter how rocky the seas, calm them. And whatever they discussed, we never discussed. Whatever it was. And their wives, not Bill Fitch's wife, but Bobby's wife would call. And a lot of others.

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Newell: As I say, she had a gift of being able to listen and to be able to give advice or opinions that made sense and were able to give the person that she was talking to confidence that this was the path to take, or what to do, whatever. And knowing that what she said was something that was for their good, it was not anything just to patronize them or anything like that. She would have been a great evangelist.

But it was amazing how many people would call and talk for hours, especially wives of some of our players, Cal players, and some of the coaches that I knew. They would have marital problems or--principally marital problems--and just need to talk.

Lage: She would have been a great psychotherapist or family therapist.

Newell: Probably, yes. But she had the ability to listen. Sometimes she'd be on the phone for an hour and a half on a call, which was fine with me, because then the phone didn't ring.

Teaching vs. Coaching

Lage: And how about your own relationship with the players? Did you see yourself as a teacher, or a father figure?

Newell: Well, I always considered myself more of a teacher than a coach. I enjoyed teaching basketball more than I enjoyed coaching. I always was of the opinion that you taught your players how to respond, how to react, how to

counter, and you did that in the practice courts. When we get out to play the game, I think anybody who ever saw me at Cal never saw me berate the team, never saw me really upset with the team, and never overcoaching the team. At time-outs, we talked, but it wasn't an emotional kind of a talk. It was just a talk about what they were doing, what we needed to do, and what they may do, how they may respond. That kind of a thing. Because we were all on the same page.

And I think the same is true with my Big Man's Camp; there's an intellectual input, I think, that you have to give to the game, along with these great physical abilities that they have, especially as NBA players. You make it simple, and you make it consistent, and as I said earlier, you should be more concerned with respect than like. And don't get those two things confused, thinking that by their liking you that you're going to be able to get better responses from them, because you're not. That's not even important in the success of a coach-player relationship. It's good if you have it, but it's not nearly as important as the respect part.

I don't know. Maybe it's an innate thing, maybe it's a gift that I think I do have. Why, I don't know, but I do, I think--God didn't gift me with this or with that or with that, but he did gift me with an ability to be able to communicate the game of basketball to a player, and I think my background, my family, and my education fitted me to be a coach.

Lage: The whole thing.

Newell: Yes, the whole thing kind of fit in, so that I was consistent in what I did, and I tried to be honest with the players on and off the court. I never promised a player he was ever going to be a starter. I always felt it was very, very important that anything I ever told a player was right. Maybe it wasn't, but I thought it was right. I always tried to keep that thing in mind that I told you: don't do a bad act to bring about a good result. I tried to always keep this in mind, not only in coaching but in all phases of my life. It doesn't always work that way, but you always try to make it work that way.

Lage: It's your goal, it's your guiding principle.

Newell: Yes, it is my guiding principle, and I hope it stays that way. I don't like to hurt people, and I don't want people to hurt me, but I don't like to hurt people, and I try to spare them. [phone call, tape interruption]

Joe Kapp

Lage: Tell me--I'm curious, of course, about Joe Kapp as a basketball player.

Newell: Joe was beautiful. Joe was one of a kind. I never had a player on any team I ever coached that was more team-oriented. I can't tell you what he meant to our team in terms of unity, in terms of one-ness. When he was on the bench--

Lage: He was on the bench a lot.

Newell: Yes, he was on the bench a lot. And to this day, he still thinks I have a hole in my head because he was on the bench that much, and not out there playing. He won some games, you know; he won two Stanford games, as I recall. And other games that I put him in in the clutch part of the game, and he'd make the basket or make a play that would win the game for us.

But he was on the bench rooting for the Bears, and God help you if you weren't rooting for them. If you weren't yelling with him, or if you weren't out there for the Bears, if you're bitching because whatever, you better not be close to him, because he's liable to grab you and say, "Get down to the other bench."

The greatest Joe Kapp story--and there are a lot of great stories with Joe Kapp--we were playing the Trojans down in L.A. It's a really important game, because we have to win that game to win the conference.

Lage: Was this a regular conference game?

Newell: Yes, and right at the end of the season. I told our players, I told Robbie, because I'd heard this, "You may get some racial remarks, Robbie." Robbie was a hot-tempered guy, but he was really a team leader; he was the captain. I said, "You may get some racial things out there," because there was a guy on SC that, I think he was kind of redneck. I said, "Don't lose your cool. They may try to get you upset," because Robbie was our key player. "You just turn and walk away from it." "Oh," he said, "Pete, don't worry. Don't worry. I'll handle it."

So right near the end of the half--it's a close game--and right near the end of the half, they foul--I think they foul Al [Buch]. This big SC center, he's their second center, he's about six-ten and about 240 pounds. He runs by Robbie and he gives him a real bang from the rear. Neither official saw it. Almost knocked him down. Robbie, boy, he gets up and he's ready to go

after him, and Al got in between them and said, "Robbie, cool it, now, cool it." The officials didn't see any of this.

So anyway, we go on. Now I go into the dressing room at halftime. It's a close game. I'm going over the half, and I'm on the board, and I turn around and there's something missing, I don't know what it is. I'm looking and I'm trying to figure, what--there's just something wrong. Finally, I said, "Where in the hell is Joe?" Nobody says anything. "Where in the hell is he? Where's Joe?" I thought maybe he was in the head or something. And I don't want to go on until everybody's there, and this goes on for two or three minutes. I'm getting a little upset at that.

Now in comes Joe. I said, "Joe, where in the hell you been?" "Something I had to do, Coach." I said, "There's nothing you have to do except help us win down here." "Just something I had to do, Coach."

I don't know what I said, but I'm really upset. I say, "Get out of there, all you, get on out on the court." Because I'm really upset, and I've lost my train of thought, what I was going to say. So they all get out there, and Joe goes over and sits on the bench, our bench [instead of warming up]. SC is shooting down at that end. I'm saying to myself--and I'm smoking a cigarette before I go out on the court--"Looks like I got to Joe." Because Joe loved to shoot the ball. "Looks like I got to him."

So we go down and we kill them the second half, absolutely kill them. So after the game, I'm talking with the press, and they come up, "Boy, you really made some great adjustments there. What did you do at the halftime?"

"Well, I--" and I started to give them what I call the Greek meatloaf--10 percent meat and 90 percent fill--[laughter]. I mumble a few things, and they don't understand anyway, so I could say a lot of things that are not really related to the subject and most of them wouldn't know. So anyway, I get through it.

But all in my mind is, where in the hell is Joe? I go in there, and Ned [Averbuck] and Joe, they're like brothers. I said, "Ned, where the hell is Joe? Where is he?" "He went, Coach." I said, "I wanted to talk to him." He said, "Well, he got out of here in a hurry." I said, "What the hell happened to him?" "Didn't you hear?" I said, "No."

He said, "Well, when we came into the dressing room, he ran out on the court, and he got this big SC center by the arm. He's grabbing him, and he's calling him a few names as he's doing it, and he said, 'My name is Kapp, and I'm sitting right over there. When there's a fight, you look for me,

because I'm really going to come after you. I'm going to knock that big fat head right off your shoulders,' and he's taking him along all the time. He takes him all the way up to the SC dressing room, and he throws him in the SC dressing room and walks in the SC dressing room, and he says, 'If any of you other guys want to fight, I'll take any one of you or all of you on. This gutless guy here, he won't fight.'"

They come out the second half, and Joe is sitting over [on the bench], "Here I am, I'm sitting right here now, you--." Well, from football, they knew he was a crazy Indian anyway. And they're shooting this way. [laughter] They come out, they can't hit anything. I don't know any of this. I think I did a hell of a coaching job. I didn't say anything at halftime. I think, "Well, maybe that's the way I ought to coach."

Then Ned tells me, and then it all makes sense to me, that's Joe. He's not going to let somebody push one of his players around. But that's a true story.

Lage: So that's why you say he was valuable on the bench?

Newell: Well, he was valuable, and he was a protector. Everybody knew in the conference, they knew Joe Kapp.

The famous story in football was, he had a quarterback sneak one time, and he ran like he had a bad knee always, and he bust right through, and the two linebackers looked like they started to go for him, and then they figured, "Well, we'll let the halfbacks hit him." And the halfbacks did the same thing, "Let the safety man get him." He runs right at the safety man, and the safety man gets out of the way. He goes for about eighty-nine yards. There were at least five guys that could have caught him, but none of them wanted to. [laughter] That's a true story. And he'd run for this touchdown, and he's just running like Molly Potts. He's not running very fast. He's kind of tired at this point, and these guys that are chasing him are starting to run faster, but as he runs slower, they run slower. But anyway, he makes the touchdown, and nobody wanted to tackle him. [laughter]

But even in the pro game, they had a great T.V. show last year talking about past Super Bowl games, and they were talking about Joe playing against an all-pro linebacker. Joe comes out and he cuts up field, and there's the linebacker. Joe runs right at him, just runs right at him and runs right through him, and he goes on for about ten, fifteen more yards. Then the linebacker's just out like this. [laughing] And the guy said, "Now, how often have you ever seen a quarterback knock out a linebacker? But you just did."

So that was Joe. Joe was something else. He just was; he was a team-oriented guy. He was that way in practice, he just brought to the team a great sense of unity, a great sense of team. Did it in football, the same thing.

Lage: So he might have been part of the reason for this terrific team?

Newell: Absolutely. Yes, and his relationships are almost all with basketball players. Bill McClintock, and Ned, and Bobby Dalton, all those guys. But Ned and Bill McClintock particularly are very close to him. Yes, Joe was a delight, and really a macho guy.

Cal Spirit Groups at the NCAA Finals in Louisville

Newell: You know, the most unique thing I ever did was before the final NCAA game in Louisville, the pre-game meal was supposed to--it's like the last supper, you know, for the teams. I invited the band and the pom-pon girls and the whole pep squad to our pre-game meal, because they hadn't had a square meal since they were there.

Lage: They came on a shoestring.

Newell: That's right. And as we used to say, "You can't play in the band unless you know how to live off the earth." And I was so appreciative of the support that they gave, and they got the whole Kentucky contingent behind us, because Louisville got knocked out the first round, and so the first song our band played was "My Old Kentucky Home." They went down in the square and played that. So Cal didn't have any alumni; we didn't have anybody there. The other teams had 3,000, 5,000. If we had twenty fans, I would be surprised.

Lage: Did they do this deliberately?

Newell: Sure. Well, that was part--they were part of the team. The Straw Hat Band was--hell, we'd play up in Moscow, Idaho, and they'd be there. I don't know how they'd get there, but they'd get there. I considered them part of the team. I knew they hadn't eaten much, and I knew they were on a shoestring. So the funny thing is, I caught hell for the pre-game meal, the cost of the pre-game--I didn't catch hell, but boy, that was an expensive pre-game meal.

Lage: Who, the athletic director?

Newell: Yes. [laughter] I don't know if it was in jest or not, but anyway.

Lage: So they got the Kentucky locals rooting for Cal?

Newell: They got, yes, the Kentucky people, and it was in Louisville, see, so you had a lot of Kentucky people there at the game. So here is this California band playing "My Old Kentucky Home," and they're rooting for us. And hell, that was the band that did that. That's why I invited them. It was kind of spontaneous; I thought it was the right thing to do, and Florence was all for it, too. As I say, it really turned out well. It helped us. It was a big help to us, no doubt about it. But we didn't ever contrive anything. [See Cal Band Oral History Project, the Bancroft Library, for band members' recollections of the 1959 tournament.]

Lage: Some of these things just happen.

Newell: They just happen, yes. But we weren't bound, either, by convention. It's like going to Lourdes or something, for that magic fountain there. It's a game, and it's a big game, and it's very important that you give it a lot of thought and all, but it's also important that you don't overemote and that you don't overprepare and that you don't get too much into a mental funk so that you're not physically ready to play, because you've exhausted yourself mentally.

It was always important to win, and you strive to win, but as I say, the first team I had at Cal was one [win] and eleven [losses]. I was real proud of them, because I just knew that the way they responded and bounced back from the losses that we had, that they were prepared as individuals for life.

Lage: So you got a lot of satisfaction out of that, as well. But you must have felt pretty thrilled winning the NCAA.

Newell: Oh, yes. But I also feel that we won it because of that first team. I feel that first team gave us a base of what the thing was all about, and that you persevere and you learn from losing, and you get better from losing if you understand that. You don't despair, and it's hard to keep your confidence up, but as I say, we had a lot of things that were kind of negative, in a sense, with that first year's team.

Black Players on Newell's Cal Teams

Lage: You said earlier that you had three black kids on that team, and you had some alumni grumbling.

Newell: Well, I heard it came back that some of those alumni weren't particularly pleased. It was just individuals, but you've got to expect that, I guess. But it was something that, if you're eighteen and two, the alumni will tolerate. But if you're one and eleven like we were, they're looking for things [to criticize]. Especially, Nibs Price was a legend there at Cal, and should have been. As I say, if it wasn't for him, it could have been really tough that first year.

But I never considered it tough. I started the USF program right after the war, where again I had all freshman players, and learned to build it up. I went to Michigan State and I had really very, very little to start with. So I had the confidence in what we were doing, that in the end we were going to be all right. So I could go through a few dark tunnels on the way and not worry, and I just didn't allow myself to be guided by what other people thought, or to be graded by other people as to, well, am I doing good or not? To me, that was unimportant. I still had that attitude.

I never worried about security in coaching. Maybe I should have, but I never did, because I always felt I could make it outside of coaching. I don't know what I'd do, but I was sure I'd make it. I was on the brink sometimes where I was going to find out what I could do, but something would always happen.

Lage: You could go back to pro baseball.

Newell: Yes, but the curve ball was pretty tough to hit. [laughter]

Lage: The team that you actually won the NCAA with didn't have any black players. Was that because of the trouble recruiting?

Newell: That's the last NCAA team that won without a black player.

Lage: I've read that.

Newell: Earl [Robinson] was the captain the year before and graduated. The other two black players, one of them, Bobby Tealer, couldn't--Bobby was from Mission High, and he played for a real good friend of mine. He came to Cal, and he could not handle Spanish. You had to take a language. I got him tutored, and he was a good student in the other things, but he just couldn't handle Spanish.

He flunked it two semesters in a row. So he was on probation, and I got him in summer school taking the course. Again a tutor. And he just couldn't--. A lot of black athletes had a hard time with languages, a lot of black students.

So I called up John Benington, who was coaching at Drake, and I said, "John, I've got a kid here," and I told him exactly what I'm telling you. I said, "John, this kid can play for you." I said, "You won't have a better kid on your team, a person. The kid will play for you. You and Barbara will end up adopting him," which they damn near did.

He went back there, he graduated, he was All-Missouri Valley two years, had a great career there. Later, in the sixties, he came back to Berkeley, from San Francisco State, to the chancellor's office, I believe. Check this out, because this is a really interesting story.

Lage: He was in the chancellor's office at Berkeley?

Newell: Yes, at Berkeley, and here is a player that on that language requirement was dropped out, and by this circuitous route came back to Berkeley in an administrative position.

He ends up in the chancellor's office at the school. He came by to see me, and I said, "Isn't it something here?" It was fifteen years before, I guess. Just about the year I left, he came on the campus. So I don't know if he's still on, or he went back to San Francisco State. He had an executive position at San Francisco State, and they brought him over to Cal. He was such a personable guy, just a handsome guy, too--not that that had anything to do with his getting the job, offered it, but he'd interview well. There was no B.S. about him, but he was a very presentable person and a nice person, you could see just talking to him. But it shows you how things worked out.

I was so pleased, because Bobby really helped John improve his team at Drake. The next job John got was up because his team did good there, and Bobby had a lot to do with it.

And then the other black player was Washington. I could never remember his first name, so I called him General George. There were a lot of players I couldn't remember their first name. I think I told you, I had this one, I still don't know what his name was. George or Tom, I couldn't remember. I'd call him Tom one day and George the next. It seemed like when I'd call him George, "Hey, my name's Tom;" I'd call him Tom, "My name's George." So after about half a year of this, I said, "Your name is now George Tom, and it's going to be nothing else but George Tom." By the time he was out of Cal, everybody was calling him George Tom. [laughter] Ask the players about George Tom. Kramer was his last name.

Lage: And Washington?

Newell: Washington was at Cal two years. He went in the air corps. He was a captain in the air corps the last time I heard from him. I don't know--have you talked to Earl Robinson?

Lage: No, I'd like to.

Newell: That's somebody you should talk to. Yes, Earl will talk. He's at Laney College, with Ned. He could tell you where General George is. Bob Washington was his name. But he was General George. I gave a lot of players names that I could remember, not what were their regular names. He looked like a general, George Washington. He was a big kid; he was a good kid. He only played there one year on the varsity, and then he decided to go into the air corps, and I think he got married.

Cal vs. USF, 1956: The Eight-Minute Stall

Lage: What else should we cover today? I have read about one game where you held the ball for eight minutes against USF.

Newell: Yes.

Lage: Now, what was that all about?

Newell: That was a very, very famous game. This game was in 1956. USF had won forty-some games in a row; they were the number-one team in the country, defending NCAA champ, would win it again that year and would go on to win sixty-some games. This was about their fiftieth winning game. When you played USF in those days, [Bill] Russell was such a prolific shot-blocker that he would really put a stamp on you, and two weeks later you'd still be expecting to see that hand up there blocking your shot.

And this was the most interesting game I ever coached. [telephone interruption]

Lage: We were talking about that '56 game.

Newell: So anyway, it was a fun game for me.

Lage: And here your former assistant was the USF coach [Phil Woolpert].

Newell: My former assistant, and he's playing all the basketball I taught, playing the same thing, so I know it backwards and forwards; he knew the same thing I

knew. So, I told the team, I said, "We're going to play a fun game, actually. We're not going to let Russell block the shot. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to divide the court differently than it's been divided. I'm going to divide it right from the basket to the base line to the center circle. That's going to be the line. What we're going to do, we're going to put Russell on one side of the court guarding somebody, and I'm going to screen him so he doesn't get to the other side, so we're going to make our shot over there."

So we didn't really run our regular stuff. We would get Russell, and we'd put a screen on him so he couldn't get back over to the other side to block anything. It was so strange to him, he didn't know what to do. He'd go this way and my guy would go, he'd go this way and my guy would go. So he never even came close to blocking a shot the first half.

Well, the first half, I don't have many players. This was the second year at Cal, juniors. We had a good year going. In fact, we ended up second in the conference. I didn't want Russell to imprint this team like he did--he intimidated you to the point, blocking those shots, where as I said, for two weeks, you're expecting somebody to block your shot. It takes away your confidence. I didn't want him to block shots; that's what I was concerned with. And I'd like to beat them, because they were undefeated--

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Lage: Okay, so you've got your strategy based on not letting Bill Russell block. That was the first thing. There were three things.

Newell: Yes, and the second strategy I had was, they had a terrific press defense, and K. C. Jones was their star defensive player. So I said, "Now, whoever is guarding K. C., when a shot's taken, go straight down the court, because K. C. will have to go with you." And K. C. did. Well, it took them right out of their press. We were ahead of them sixteen to seven after about fifteen minutes. Sixteen to seven.

And the third thing I did, I said, "On defense, we're really going to screw them up." I never played a zone defense. I said, "We'll start off--this is what they do in the zone, and this is what they do in the man-to-man," because they were doing the same things I used to do. Everything I used to --but I'd added to my offense, where they hadn't. You didn't have to do a lot of things with Russell. So I said, "When they start this particular motion, I want you to yell, 'Zone,' and slide right into a zone position, because they'll come back out and they'll go to here, and when they come back out, now go to man-to-man, but don't say anything. But they'll run a zone offense, and you're in a man-to-man."

Well, they kept thinking we were in a zone defense, and they're running zone offense, which is a lot of standing around, but we're playing man-to-man defense, so they can't do nothing. Because it's pretty hard to run a zone offense into a man-to-man defense and get much done. So we got away with that.

Then just to change it, I'd have them go into the man-to-man, and then after the first pass yell "Zone." And now they're really confused, because they were trying to run their man-to-man against the zone, and that doesn't work. But it wasn't really--it was a zone, but it wasn't a zone. So anyway, they can't get anything. They only have six points after about fourteen, fifteen minutes.

And then K. C. got smart. So when the guy would go down the court, he wouldn't go with him. We'd get the guy down there, but we'd never get the ball to him by himself. But K. C. was so tough, and I didn't have any reserves. I didn't have a third guard, and I didn't have a backup. I had Larry Friend bringing the ball up the court, and he did a great job. But when K. C. started staying in the back court, I couldn't do that. I had to change. I had to use Robbie and this other guard. Robbie was all right, but the other guard--I forget who it was--he had a problem bringing it up. So anyway, they caught up with us. So at halftime, I think it was a one-point difference.

Now, my center was Asplund, who had done a great job. Russell had only made one basket, and he hadn't blocked a shot, hadn't even come close. So we started off the second half, and Swede gets a quick foul. They make a basket, we make a basket, and I think they're three points ahead. We've got the ball. But we fouled on a play. We fouled on a play, and it was Asplund's fifth foul. I didn't have a reserve. Asplund made about eleven points, nine points on Russell, because we went right at Russell. With him, we'd go right at Russell. He was able to get a shot on him, drive up to the basket and come off. Anyway, we screened him off, too.

So I put in Joe Hagler. Do you know Joe Hagler?

Lage: No.

Newell: Joe is--I don't know if he was there on scholarship either. Joe was built like a Coca-Cola bottle. If you can just imagine a Coca-Cola bottle. [laughter] He had wide hips like this, and he was a wonderful guy--he's a lawyer--a wonderful guy. His hips were twice as wide as his shoulders. He's a big guy about six-ten, six-eleven, about 250 pounds. Speed and quickness was something he wasn't even close to having. I told Joe--what had happened was, when Asplund went out, Russell was staying in the paint, staying right

under the basket. He wouldn't go out and guard Joe. So I just got up and I yelled, "Hold the ball, Joe."

Lage: Was Russell doing this because he didn't want to be screened?

Newell: No, he wanted to stay in the paint and block the shots. He didn't want to get away from the basket, because then we could score behind him. But K. C. always--they were always a pressing team. I never expected this. Joe's standing over there at the side foul line extended, standing over on the side, so I told my players, "Just get over on the other side."

Lage: You could tell them this from the sideline?

Newell: Yes. They could hear me. I just got up and said, "Get over there."

Lage: Of course, the rules were very different.

Newell: Yes. Well, they were.

Lage: No shot clock.

Newell: No shot clock. And then Larry came by, and I said, "Larry, if Russell doesn't come out, and nobody goes over to play him, just stay where you are. Just stay where you are. But whoever's man goes over to play him, our guy goes over there to relieve him from the ball, go over and get the ball from him, give him some help. But until somebody goes over there, don't go near him."

Well, nobody goes over. And here's Joe--[laughs], "Pete," he said, "I forgot which one was my pivot foot." [laughter]

Lage: I should think so!

Newell: I said, "Hell, Joe, the referees forgot what your pivot foot was." "Yeah, but I didn't know that. And then I felt like I had to go to the bathroom." [laughter] I said, "Thank God you didn't. Everything else--." Anyway, to make a long story short, he held the ball for eight minutes. Russell never did come out.

Lage: And was their coach calling in suggestions to them?

Newell: Yes. I mean, he's playing into my hands, because I have no reserves. And he's got the great team. He's leaving me--there's only a three-point difference at this point. So I guess there's five minutes to go, and now I call a time-out. So I put in Washington, who's only six-four and a half, six-five,

as my center. He's just a sophomore. I put him in, and I said, "Now, General George, we're going to get you that ball, and we're going to throw you the ball, and I want you just to get yourself in your range. I want you to just pop that ball. He's not going to come out at you. So when you just feel like you have it, just measure it and let it go." Which he did.

Damn ball looked like it was going right in. If it had gone in, I'd have been a genius, but the ball just went out and went back--and bounced out. So now they've got the ball.

Well, now we went to a press defense. We really went after them. We made them turn the ball over--they went into a stall. See, people forget this: they went into a stall. They started stalling the ball. We stole the ball from them four times, and we were only able to convert once.

Lage: In this last--

Newell: Yes, in the last five minutes. But they were stalling the ball, see. We held it for eight. I never expected to ever be able to hold the ball like that, because they were always a press team. Why wouldn't they go out and press? Why not put somebody else on him? Why didn't they run K. C. at him? Just so many things. If I were coaching their team and trying to help my team, I would do exactly what they did. Give us a rest, because I had nobody to replace Robbie and nobody to replace Larry, and took a tremendous drop from center. That Swede [Asplund] was about six-eight, six-nine, he could play Russell fairly well. But I can't play Russell with a six-four and a half, six-five guy. And Joe certainly couldn't play him, because Joe was so slow and Russell was so quick.

So it was right into my hands. But we just couldn't put the shot down. And they beat us, I think, thirty-three to twenty-eight, thirty-three to twenty-seven, something like that. But of course, I caught hell. I caught hell all over the place. But it didn't bother me a bit, because--

Lage: Who did you catch hell from?

Newell: Oh, one of the USF guys came, "You know, you could have cost us our number-one ranking." I said, "What the hell you think we're out there playing you for? That's what we're out trying to do. I coach at Cal, I don't coach at USF any more." [laughter] It's like I was a USF guy. Like I'm going to coach the game so USF can win. And then some of those sports writers who were great USF fans, because they could see them going to the NCAA and all that, and they were worried that we'd beat them. We gave them their only game. If you looked at the scores, it was the closest score they got. Russell made one basket for the game.

Lage: And it's such an incredibly low score.

Newell: Yes. But this one writer was really--Brachman was his name--I said, "Now, Brachman, you're a genius in basketball." "Well, go on, what do you--." I said, "You follow USF." "Yeah, sure, I've been following USF for the last three years." I said, "You know as much about them as probably any writer." "I know more, I follow them all the time."

"What is the one identifying thing, Bob, about their team? What is the one thing from a team standpoint, what is the one thing that makes them so strong?" "Well, their defense." I said, "What about it?" "Well, their press defense." I said, "Now, genius, you tell me how in the hell I could hold the ball with a guy built like a Coca-Cola bottle--" and that's exactly what I told him "--out there for eight and a half minutes against the best pressing team in the country?" And boy, there was dead silence.

Finally he said, "Well, Pete, I never thought of it that way." I said, "Well, you should have thought of it before you ever wrote."

Lage: He wrote something--

Newell: Oh, he was vitriolic, because he was afraid I had hurt USF's ranking.

Lage: What a ridiculous stance!

Newell: Well, it shows--and he said, "Well--" and he later wrote something where he admitted he missed it. How could we ever hold the ball against the USF team, that great USF team that was so noted for its pressing? Which it was.

Lage: Did you ever talk to Phil Woolpert about how it happened?

Newell: We never talked about the game. He knew I knew what I was doing. And he didn't take it as an affront or anything.

Lage: No, but why did he not have his team press?

Newell: I don't know. I'd never--that's a professional thing.

Lage: You don't talk about things like that?

Newell: No. I wouldn't. Because it makes it look like I'm second-guessing his coaching, and I wouldn't do that. But the point is that the fact was, I did not have any bench. And the fact I had to end up with a six-four and a half, six-five center against their center was an indication of this, that one

position. And then Larry Friend, who did so much in that game, when I took him out, I was in a little trouble, too, because I didn't have even close to a substitute for him. So it was a very interesting game.

Bob Ferrick, the Santa Clara coach said the best thing. "Pete," he says, "let me tell you something. When you play a game like that, you make damn sure you win." [laughter] I said, "Bob, I'm going to remember that next time." If I could predict it or forecast it, I would.

I never planned it. I never planned it because I never dreamed they'd ever respond that way--because they were the favorites in the game. The only conceivable way we could win it was the way it developed, because we were only about maybe four, at the most five down in the last five minutes, and we forced these turnovers, we really did a good job on pressing them and made them turn the ball over. They were trying to stall, and we got two layups, and we missed them both.

Lage: Could have been different.

Newell: Just the presence of Russell was one of the reasons. Even when he couldn't block a shot, he was in the building, and you're always conscious of him in the building. Robbie had a breakaway basket situation that he missed. Russell couldn't have blocked it, and Robbie hurried it a little, and it just rolled out. But I really enjoyed the game. I really did. It was one of those real chess games.

Lage: What did the audience--

Newell: Cal guys were happier than hell, because they saw we still had a chance.

Lage: They didn't mind this eight minutes of nothing?

Newell: USF guys, they were stone silent, because they were afraid they were going to lose. We were--

Lage: What did they think about it--eight minutes of nothing, or a psychological drama?

Newell: Our guys were cheering and all, and USF started to boo, and then they didn't boo. It was almost like they, "Why don't we go out and press that guy?" But it was a question of Russell coming out or not coming out, and he preferred to stay there. But if the same thing had happened to me, I'd have just rotated somebody else on him. I'd have Russell stay where he is; I'd just stay in a zone and go in a zone if that's what they want to do. But no, Phil got stubborn, and that was fine with me.

Lage: Yes. See who would give first.

Newell: Yes. And I didn't--. I waited until five minutes because I figured I could play them five minutes with the six-five guy at center, because we're going to go into a press. Because now I've got a speedy, quicker center. I could never press with Joe Haggler. I could play Joe against certain teams, and he could play backup center for me for three or four minutes, in a certain kind of a game, and be effective and help me, and help his team. But in that game, no. Because Russell was just too formidable for him, too quick, too big, too big a jumper.

But it was interesting, because as I say, it gave them confidence. USF never blocked a shot. We went from the last place in the conference, where we went one and eleven the previous year, to ten and six that next year. I think we were second. UCLA won.

Lage: That was quite an improvement in just a year.

Newell: Oh, it was a good improvement. I was real pleased with the improvement of the team. See, I'm trying to think what freshman team we had--Robbie, that was Robbie's team, and General George. Yes, that's the one that went undefeated.

Lage: The freshmen went undefeated your first year?

Newell: The freshmen did, yes.

Lage: And did you get involved in coaching the freshmen?

Newell: Bob Albo coached the freshmen the first year and Rene was my assistant in the 1955-56 season. You only had one assistant. He coached the freshmen, and he also scouted, and he also helped in games and all.

Lage: He was pretty busy.

Newell: He was very busy, yes. Sure. On weekends, he was usually somewhere scouting your next opponent.

Scouting Reports

Lage: Was he a good scout?

Newell: Oh, Rene was great. Rene was the best.

Lage: And then he'd prepare reports, and you'd talk with the team? Is that the way it worked?

Newell: He would talk with the team. We'd talk about what he'd seen when we'd have our meeting, and then I always let him, because he's the one that saw it, I'd let him give the report, because he was good, and the players had complete confidence and faith in him. And that helped him too, because I had confidence that he could do this important thing.

Lage: Plus he's preparing the team that's moving along.

Newell: Yes, sure.

Lage: Did you confer with him on that, on what you wanted done with the freshmen?

Newell: No, he was the coach. He'd coached at SI [Saint Ignatius High School]. He was a good coach, and he knew what I wanted. He'd played for me at USF. No, I would never pretend to somebody like that. It would be kind of demeaning, at least the way I look at it. Some coaches, they want to have control of everything. And I gave Rene a lot of responsibility, like on the scouting and all, and it was well placed, because he always did an excellent job. He was really a good basketball mind, very, very good.

Lage: Great. Okay, I'm thinking we should wind up. We're never going to cover everything I wanted to cover, but I have to come see you again.

Coach Pete Newell and the Cal basketball team holding their NCAA championship trophy, Louisville, Kentucky, March 21, 1959.

Photo courtesy of University Archives

VI LESSONS OF BASKETBALL AND THE NCAA TOURNAMENTS OF 1959 AND 1960

[Interview 3: April 5, 1994]##

The Growth of the NCAA and the Decline of the NIT

Lage: Now, we talked last time a fair amount about the coaching years at Cal, and we talked about some of the memorable games and some of the players. But we didn't talk about the winning games in the '59 tournament, or the losing one in '60. I know they've been written up quite a bit, but would you want to reflect on that '59 tournament, how the game went, and what it was like to get your team ready for Oscar Robertson?

Newell: The Final Four has always been kind of--I shouldn't say always, but since about the early fifties, it's been a very big, big event. It wasn't prior to that, because the NCAA was not that big a tournament. Up until the fifties, the NIT was the big tournament.

Lage: Right, that's what I was surprised to learn as I got ready for this interview.

Newell: Well, the reason for that was that the NCAA was kind of a closed tournament. Only the big conferences would send their league champion. Teams that were independent, and in those days, so many teams were independent, so few teams were conference teams, and the best teams were the independent teams. CCNY [City College of New York] in New York, and Bradley, and Notre Dame, and DePaul, and those kind of teams, they were independent teams in the Middle West, and out in the West here, USF, Santa Clara, Saint Mary's, and all the teams other than those in the Pacific Coast Conference were independent. Saint Louis was one of the top teams in the country then, and Boston College was a big team in the East.

Lage: So these independent teams tended to play each other during the year?

Newell: No, they'd play in their own area. They would play the conference teams, but in their own area. There wasn't as much travel, see. The travel really didn't start until after the war. There was some travel across the country before then, but it was by train, and you had to do it at certain times, because of the time involved away from classes.

Lage: When did the NCAA become the premier--

Newell: In the fifties. For instance, to give you an idea: in 1949, we won the NIT at USF. One week later, Kentucky won the NCAA. Kentucky was defeated in the first round in the NIT. The next year, the two teams, the finalist of the NCAA and the finalist of the NIT, the winner was CCNY, who had never been invited to the NCAA, but '50 was the first year. The runner-up was Bradley. Both times, the finalists were those two schools, both tournaments. Both times, CCNY won. Those teams were never invited to the NCAA prior to 1951. And even the next year, I'm not sure who won the next year. But for a number of years there, the NCAA was won by teams that were NIT teams who had not been ever invited to the NCAA before 1951.

Lage: So about '50, the NCAA started inviting these non-conference teams.

Newell: It was all part of the design--let me explain one reason for this. In 1950 up to 1953, the NCAA's executive director was Tug Wilson. Tug Wilson was also the commissioner of the Big Ten. It was only part-time. His staff was one assistant, Walter Beyers, and a secretary. In 1953, and I was in the Big Ten then at Michigan State, the Big Ten told Tug that, "You've got to make a decision here. You're giving too much time to the NCAA; if that's what you want to do, go that way, and we'll get a new commissioner." But there was no way he wanted to do that.

So he kind of handed it over to Walter Beyers, a very young, bright, energetic guy. Walter Beyers became the executive secretary and immediately took the NCAA's base to the Phillips Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. Once he got there, then everything started to change. One of the first things he did in basketball was to enlarge the NCAA basketball tournament in terms of teams. He enlarged the numbers. Although prior to him, CCNY and Bradley were able to be invited because of their records, he enlarged it more. It became slowly the national tournament. The more he enlarged it, the more it watered down the NIT, just like the NIT now, with sixty-four teams--see, I would say that there were no more than eight teams before 1950 in the NCAA.

Lage: Eight conferences, one from each conference.

Newell: Yes, one from each conference. I think it was eight. And if you qualified, you're obviously in the regionals right to begin with. And that's about the way it was. I think there were about two teams from each region that were invited.

Then it became, I think sixteen, and then twenty-four, and then--I don't know what next, but now it's sixty-four.

Lage: What was it in '59, how big had it gotten?

Newell: In '59, I think it was sixteen. And then it was twenty-four in '60. We had to play five games in '60; we only had to play four games, win four games, in '59. And then we kept getting to the point where now it's sixty-four. I'm quite certain that's about right. Because we didn't have to play that extra game. There were some extra games, as I recall--. I tell you what it could have been, it could have been twenty-four in '59, and maybe thirty-two in '60. That seems a little bit more likely.

The 1959 Team and the Tournament

Lage: How did your team feel about going up against Oscar Robertson and Jerry West? Was that intimidating or--?

Newell: Oh, no, no, no. We always felt we could beat anybody. I mean, it was close. We could. We'd competed against and beaten good teams. We were in the regionals four straight years in a row, in the final game of the regionals, the final eight, four straight years.

Lage: So you had the tournament experience.

Newell: Yes, sure. We got beat by a real top USF team in a very, very close game in the first regional [1957]. The second regional was the one I told you about, where I felt that official threw the game on us.

Lage: Seattle, in 1958. You felt you might have gone all the way there.

Newell: We could have gone all the way then, absolutely. I think we would have. We had a tremendously close-knit group, but we didn't have the talent that we had the next year in terms of depth and all. But yes, we felt we could have won it the year before, so when we got to the Final Four, we weren't

particularly surprised. We beat both teams, as I recall, getting to the Final Four by about twenty points. Both years, we did. And we were playing really good ball. Our conference was very, very strong.

Lage: But you were a surprise in '59 to the national press, weren't you?

Newell: Well, we were, because we weren't supposed to be very strong. But we had a couple of kids emerge--Imhoff, who had never played much, Bill McClintock, a transfer from Monterey Junior College. He was a tremendous asset. We had a real good freshman team, and we had Earl Shultz and Bobby Wendell and Dave Stafford, Dick Doughty and Stan Morrison.

Lage: Now, are these people that had been--I know Imhoff didn't shine in high school. Did Bill McClintock come as a star from the JC?

Newell: Well, he was from Milwaukee. He had been out of school for three years--

Lage: Oh, so he was older.

Newell: --and he had worked for the Falk Corporation. He played baseball on Sundays with two kids that played for me at USF. One, Paul Schramka, and I became very close friends. Even after he left school, we corresponded all the time. Then he wrote me and told me about this baseball player he knew that was a perfect guy for my style of basketball play. He was a basketball player, too. He was smart, and he really felt that he could play at this level.

So I got him--he didn't have the grades to get into Cal. I got him into Monterey JC. I don't know how, but he got into Cal. You know, there were no back doors, but he got in. He made enough good grades, and I don't know how he ever got those grades he got, but he got them, and he got into Cal. It was a real struggle for him. But then he graduated, and he's a high school administrator. He was a tremendous--he was a man. When he got out of high school, he worked three years in physical work. So he was about as old as anybody on the team.

And our team, we were getting more confident, and we were just ready to make the big league. We could have made it the year before, even though our team wasn't nearly as good as the '59 team in terms of depth and all, and size.

Lage: You really had faith in your system and your preparation.

Newell: Well, the players did. Yes, we all did. We always felt--well, we were the best defensive team in the country. When you get to the final eight, there are not a lot of shoestring teams, so if you can make that hurdle into the

Final Four, you've got a chance. We loved to play those teams that had the big scorers, because historically, we cut them down. And we were good defensively. We were the best in the country, and we had been year after year.

Lage: So was this kind of a test of your system also? Did you see it that way?

Newell: Well, in a sense, yes, because you're playing off-Broadway until you get to the Final Four, and then you're on Broadway. But we felt we were ready for Broadway. And being underdogs, we loved that.

Well, to get back to what kind of underdogs we were--and this is a fact. It's hard to believe it, but it's an actual fact. We won our last twelve games in the conference. We won the conference easily; I don't know how many games we were ahead of everybody. Still, we didn't have but one player on the first two All-Pacific Coast teams.

Lage: This is in '59?

Newell: Fifty-nine, the year we won it. The one was Al Buch, our captain, was tied for the tenth spot with another guard from some school, I don't know who it was.

Lage: That's incredible!

Newell: We had nobody in the first team, and as I say, the only one we had in the second team was Al Buch. And here we had beaten everybody.

Lage: Now, did this seem unfair to you?

Newell: No, it didn't bother us. Didn't bother them either. We never went for--

Lage: You didn't have the star quality, the individual.

Newell: Well, the way we played, it was so much more team that we never had the individual statistics that catch the eye of these people that pick those teams. But we were happy with ourselves. That's what's important, what you think of yourself, not what other people think.

Lage: It sure seems to help when you go out there for the Final Four.

Newell: Yes. And I loved the challenge. And I'll tell you, they had a funny thing happen. In 1959, we go to the Final Four in Louisville. Florence and I and Dick Friendlich, who was maybe the best basketball writer, a very bright man, and a tremendously insightful basketball writer.

Lage: From--?

Newell: The [San Francisco] Chronicle. We had gone out to have something to eat, and we had come back to the hotel just to sit down and have a cup of coffee. It was a Thursday night. Those days, we played Friday and Saturday. We were playing Cincinnati--see, Cal never had any rooters back there. Cincinnati had thousands of people.

Lage: Oh, you mean--

Newell: Rooters, all the funny hats and all that that they put on those people, and you wonder if they ever take a look in the mirror or something. [laughter] Anyway. West Virginia had a lot of people, and of course, Louisville was the fourth team in there, and of course there were a lot of Louisville people. They weren't staying in the hotel.

Anyway, the assistant coach for Cincinnati was sitting at a table with a lot of Cincinnati people, and we happened to be sitting nearby. I didn't even know who he was; Ed Jucker was his name--and he was talking in a very loud voice about, "Well, yeah, but they've been playing out on the West Coast, and that style of ball is no problem," and he was going on and on like that. I was kind of laughing, because he had no idea who I was. Dick kept expecting me to challenge him. I'm not going to challenge him, I'll just listen to him. And everybody was, "Yeah, that's right, that's right, and boy, we've got to really worry about West Virginia, because that Jerry West," and all that. And that was the kind of talk that was going on there. Of course, I loved it, because it looked like they were looking right by us.

Well, then we played the game, and we controlled the tempo of the game, we did a great job on Oscar [Robertson]. Bobby Dalton was the one that guarded him. But he got a lot of help; that's the kind of defense we played anyway. And we won the game by about six or eight points. It was a game that we were used to playing, a close game--getting down to taking care of the ball, and taking good shots, not taking bad shots, and not being careless with the ball. We sure didn't dominate them, but we felt comfortable. In the second half, we were always ahead three, five, seven points.

So the next year, we played Cincinnati again. Now Ed is quoted in the paper saying, "Well, last year, we didn't really know what to expect, and they were better than we thought. We weren't used to playing that style. But now we know about them, and about their strengths and the kind of team they are; they won't catch us by surprise now." And it was a complete carbon copy of the game before, almost the same score, the same

difference in the score, the same scenario. We got control of the tempo, and that's the kind of game that we played because we were real sound.

Lage: Could their coach have made better decisions that would have changed the outcome?

Newell: No, not really. Because we were able to slow down most any team. One of the things in basketball the coaches today don't seem to understand is that your offense should complement your defense. Because in basketball, when the other team gets the ball, you're immediately on defense. Many, many coaches think you get on defense when you get back over the middle line. As a result, at the culmination of their offensive pattern, they end up with four men on one side of the court with no design for rebounding, no design for balance. If they miss the shot, the ball comes streaming down to the other side of the court, because they're not able to defend it.

Well, one reason we were so good at defending the break was, we rebounded to a pattern. Everybody knew exactly where they were supposed to be. If they were in a center position, whether it was the center or not, he rebounded one place. If you were a strong side forward, you knew where to rebound. It could be any person playing that position, but that position rebounded here, center rebounded another place, and then the weak side forward, wing man, he rebounded in a certain place.

So we always ended up with what you called a triangle on the board, so we had the three points of recovery. So whenever we didn't get the rebound, the close man stayed right on their rebounder and pressured him so that we occupied him so he couldn't turn and throw the ball up court, and we weren't all on one side so that we couldn't stop the flow of the ball. We were always balanced. We called it two-one-two retreat. Because we were so sound up there, we were able to many times steal passes when they tried to force the pass out, our guards would play their men man-to-man. They never worried about getting back, because if their man went back, we went back with him.

But it was all predicated on the soundness of five men doing what they're supposed to do, which we were good at. So that's why we were able to control the tempo. Teams that tried to force things on us would throw the ball away. We played, I think in '60, we played Utah. Utah hit 57 percent on us, but we got something like twenty-eight more shots. We hit 40 percent and beat them by twenty, twenty-two points, something like that, because Utah turned the ball over so often they didn't get their shots. We had only one turnover so we got a shot every time we had the ball.

Lage: Because you controlled the ball.

Newell: Well, because we got so many shots. We didn't throw the ball away. We'd force them to throw the ball away. Every time they'd throw the ball away, they'd lose any chance for a shot, and now we got a chance. We missed a shot, get a rebound, miss it, and then finally sink the shot. So we did do a real good rebounding job. We didn't throw the ball away, we forced them into errors, and that's going to win a lot of games for you if you can do that. So that was what our strength was, taking care of the ball, forcing mistakes on the other team.

The JVs Step Up in 1960

Lage: Now, what happened in 1960 against Ohio State?

Newell: Now, see, here's something a lot of people don't know about 1960. In 1959, when we won the NCAA, we graduated three of our top forwards and our three top guards.

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Newell: We were picked about fifth, sixth in the conference, because we had graduated all these players. The only game we lost before the final to Ohio State was to USC, and we beat them three other times that year.

Lage: You only lost one game that whole season?

Newell: We were twenty-eight and one. And we had guys that nobody even knew were in school that started in that team. I shouldn't say that. A lot of our team had been on the JVs the year before. I had Tandy Gillis, who was on the JV team. He started at forward. He held Oscar Robertson in the semifinal game of the Final Four to something like sixteen points. He held Jerry West to one basket in a preseason tournament where we beat West Virginia, which was kind of a replay of the NCAA game the year before.

Bobby Wendell was the starting guard, and he had never lettered. He was on the JV team. Earl Shultz was probably our fifth guard. He was a sophomore, and he didn't play that many minutes as a sophomore, but he was a very, very good one. So when we graduated all the senior guards, Earl moved right on in, and so did Bobby Wendell, as the starters. Then I had McClintock and Imhoff back and Dick Doughty.

Lage: But they were your three big ones that were back.

Newell: Yes. But you know, the thing that made that team so great was these guards who were able, without hardly any experience at that level, to take a team to a twenty-eight and one record. We could have easily been twenty-nine and "O" going to the last game. And as I say, they were again picked for about fourth in the conference, even though we had won the NCAA the year before, because, "Well, they don't have any guards, and although they do have those two guys coming back, all their forwards graduated, except for McClintock." And it was true.

But we had a JV team. We had a tradition where when you were a senior, you stepped up. You knew you were going to get the opportunity.

Lage: And you must have had a lot of drilling in those freshman-sophomore years.

Newell: Sure. Well, Rene Herrerias was the freshman coach, and of course, he helped with the varsity too.

Lage: And what about JV? Who did the JV?

Newell: Rene and I. We always had Bob Blake, as I recall, and we had Rupe Ricksen as one of our assistants for a couple of years, and then Bob Blake. They helped us.

Lage: They used your system, your drills?

Newell: Oh, yes. The freshmen drilled the same way. So when they came to the varsity, when they got to be a junior or senior playing, they could go right in and practically play the same as the guy that graduated. You do things that you don't know why you do them, but they seem right. One of the things I would do was every Wednesday, I did a full-court scrimmage. I'd let the JVs play the top players, first five. Actually, about the first eight. This was kind of a tradition every Wednesday. It was kind of a morale thing, too, because they knew they always got a chance to play against the guys who were playing ahead of them.

I would always devote that day to not coaching the first string but coaching the JVs. In a sense I'm really picking on them. I'm really giving them all my attention, which they loved, because instead of my yelling at Imhoff and those guys, I'm on the JV guy. Not bad, but I'm giving him all my attention. And they knew that. It got to be almost a tradition every Wednesday, they'd just beat the hell out of the starting five. It got to the point where I would say to the starting five, "I must have holes in my head, I'm starting the wrong team all the time; they beat you every Wednesday."

Then I would go out and I would really exhort the JVs, and I've had the other guys upset. I would never call anything for my starting five. I'd get the guy, whoever was blowing the whistle, I said, "Don't give our first five guys any calls."

Dalton, I remember Dalton when he was a JV player, he's the one I used to say, "If you could buy yourself for what you're worth and sell yourself for what you think you're worth, you and I could both retire." So he'd come out, "Well, here it is Wednesday, we've got to play those bums again." He's yelling to the other JV guys. "Hell, let's go out and do what we do every Wednesday." It would really get to these other guys.

Lage: Yes, I bet.

Newell: Yes. So they became great games, and I loved them. But they always knew they would get to play. I think coaches make a mistake when a guy isn't playing. I always felt that I was more interested in pleasing the twelfth guy on my team than I was the first guy. The reason for that simply is that the twelfth player, at least in my experience, is working hard. He's really giving great effort every day, and he brings the level of practice up to a lot higher plane than a twelfth man that is upset because he isn't playing or a twelfth man who doesn't come out there focused or committed to really working that day. When they stepped on that basketball court that day, I wanted them just to think about basketball. When the practice is over, I didn't care what they thought about. But I didn't want any other distractions out there. And I didn't demand a lot of their time, either, like they do today, where you have the films morning, noon, and night, and all that. So we didn't overdo any of that stuff.

Lage: But I thought that you could practice less long these days than you used to be able to.

Newell: Well, the rules are you can practice less long, but I never would have been bothered by the amount of rules, because I only practiced--we were off the court every night at 6:00PM. And we didn't get on until 4:15PM, because the freshmen were on from 3:00PM--we didn't have the court until 3:00PM--they were on from 3:00PM to 4:15PM. We had to get off at 6:00PM because the ones that lived in the dorms, and even the fraternities, ate at 6:00PM. So they had to go eat.

Lage: So you didn't take up the kind of time that they do today?

Newell: Oh, no.

Lage: And yet they seemed so well prepared.

Newell: Well, yes, we were.

Conditioning in the Berkeley Hills, and Building Team Feeling

Lage: Now, their conditioning and their running, was that on the side?

Newell: Well, we didn't waste any time. It's just like anything else, if you make good use of your time...

Lage: You had them run in the hills.

Newell: They would do that before the ball practice began.

Lage: Was that unusual, that kind of conditioning?

Newell: Probably, probably. But I found out that we never had knee problems, we never had groin pulls or hamstrings. I think running up those hills extended those and developed a strength and a resiliency that wouldn't give you the pulls. Groin pulls are often in basketball because you have wet spots where a guy will slide, and his feet will go like this. If you're strengthening your groin area with your muscles in there, which you do when you're going up hill, it's a whole different set of muscles that are strengthened, that you're less apt to get a strain.

It was another thing, too, that I think the hill running was really, really important to us, because it was a team effort. I made sure that we didn't make a race out of it. I wanted them to run as a team. I had a couple of guys--Ned Averbuck, he always had a terrible time, because Ned had a rear that was two axe handles across, and to carry it up those hills was kind of tough for him. But I had somebody like Don Bowden, who was the first four-minute miler for our country, and Don was a great person and a great athlete.

Lage: And he was on your team?

Newell: No, but he would go out and he would pace, pace us up. I'd have him each day increase it a little. Not a lot, but I just wanted to increase it. And then he'd be like a sheepdog. He'd take them up there and get them going, and then he'd kind of let them run by, and then he'd go to the back, and then get them and exhort them to get up there farther and not lose the pack. And then he'd go to the front and pace them up there.

I expected them to run as a group. We just didn't want stragglers. I wasn't a track coach, so we weren't running for time. But it gave us another esprit de corps. So often, and Ned would tell you this, but three or four of the guys, they were a little tired, but Ned is really, really laboring, and they would be, "Come on, Ned, come on, Ned, you can make it." And all that, it wasn't anything contrived. I didn't actually do it for that, but it turned out that way. It was a great team sharing kind of a thing, where they cared for each other, and it's carried over all these years.

Lage: I'm glad to get that kind of story, because that's the intangible: how do you build a team?

Newell: Well, you do things that--I don't know why I did a lot of things.

Lage: I'll tell you a story Ned told me, that I thought was good.

Newell: What was that?

Lage: He said that one time you checked into a hotel, and the guys left their suitcases for the team manager to carry in. You gave them hell and said, "We all carry our own baggage."

Newell: Yes, we never--I would even be bothered, and it bothers me still, to see a substitute get off the bench and go up and throw his sweatshirt down on the floor, waiting for the manager to go--or even in a shower room, where they leave the towel on the floor. I expect them to take it and put it in the hamper. I mean, it's just common courtesy.

Lage: So you would talk to them about things like--

Newell: Little things like that, yes. To me, it's part of the education of an athlete in proper decorum, the proper manner of handling yourself and treating people. That manager is giving a lot of his time, and he gets the same respect from me as any player will get. Maybe in some instances more, because what he is doing is volunteer and not on scholarship, and I didn't want him to feel that he had to go around and pick up their dirty laundry.

Scheduling a Break in the Season

Newell: But you know, one other thing that we did: I've always believed, and strongly believed, that it's a game where if you get stale--stale is a mental and physical condition, fatigue. That's staleness. The only thing that you

can do if a team gets stale is give them rest. I think I told you this before, but when examinations would come, and I did this in my scheduling. I would tell the conference that we were in examinations for two weeks, and I didn't want a game until the third week.

Lage: You could do that?

Newell: Well, we did it, yes. And everybody was the same. Because most of us were in semester schools from the middle of January until February. So that was the way the schedule read.

Well, the second weekend--first weekend, they're all tied up, so there's no game. Second weekend, I'd schedule a game against usually Saint Mary's, Santa Clara, sometimes USF. Usually played USF earlier. But Santa Clara was the team we played most of the time in there. And the players always knew this. I would let them off until--we'd play on a Saturday--I'd let them off until Wednesday, and I would tell them I don't want to see them on the court, I don't want them playing any basketball, I didn't even care if they sat around and drank some beer and just act like any other college student at that time, and spend your time getting yourself academically adjusted as well as you possibly can for these finals.

But I said, "Under no circumstances do I want to see you around the court. I don't want to see you out there in the gym at all. I'll get you back into shape, I'm not worried about it." Because we always had great shape. But they would go really strong until the middle of January, our last game, and they knew that they had this kind of spring break, in a sense.

So that game that would be coming up against Santa Clara, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then we'd play Saturday. I would always start my last five on the team--my eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth player. They always knew they were going to start a game. My first seven players, I would play, but they'd come off the bench. But what would happen is, Wednesday they'd come back, and I would just run them ragged. They expected it, because they had had a break. And they wanted it, really, because they knew that they had to get themselves back into physical shape. But I could do that. But I couldn't do much about staleness.

But now they really wanted to play basketball. Now they're really anticipating the games and the practices and the end of the season. It was not, "God, here we go out again." I never was one to, if I didn't feel we needed to practice, I wouldn't even tell them to come out. Some coaches, "Well, I don't want to practice today," but they make them go in and put on their gear, get taped and go through the whole thing, they're out there for thirty minutes shooting around. I felt it was counterproductive, really. They

need to get away, wherever they go, and socialize. Get away from the game, at that time of the season.

Lage: So you had a lot of intensity, but they had breaks.

Newell: Oh, yes. And they knew they were going to get the breaks, and they looked forward to it. They'd go over to San Francisco, I'm sure, and have a good time. I just said, "I don't want you to embarrass yourselves, the university, or your teammates by doing some dumb-ass thing out there. That doesn't mean you can't go out and have fun, but I don't want you to end up drinking beer until two o'clock in the morning for seven nights either. I said, "Just use your judgment. If the team and the season mean anything to you, you'll be ready to come back and I'll take it from there." And they always were.

Then I would start these reserve players, and I'd play them for about twelve minutes, and maybe substitute the seventh guy, if I made a substitution in there. And then about, with eight minutes to go in the half, I'd play the regulars, for the last eight minutes. Then I would start them the second half and play them for about six or seven minutes--because I didn't want them to get all cooled off because they may pull a muscle out there. So then I'd bring in those kids again, and let them play the rest of the game.

Bob Ferrick, he was a good friend of mine. He'd get madder.

Lage: Was he the Santa Clara coach?

Newell: Yes. He'd say, "I get my guys all ready to play your guys, and here you come up with a bunch of guys that we don't even know are on your team." I said, "Bob, I've got to do what's good for my team. I can't think about your team any more than you should think about my team. Whatever's got a Bear jersey on out there, tell them you're playing the Bears." And the game didn't mean that much to me, in terms of winning or losing, but it meant so much to the team because the regulars would just--they were the greatest rooters in the world for the ones that are playing out there.

Lage: So that built team feeling also.

Newell: Yes. And I did that because--not with a morale purpose in mind really. I did it for a number of reasons. One is, I'd like to have every kid that played for me for three years be able to say he started a game. I think that it is a binding kind of thing for the players there, to give the respect, and to understand what it is to sit on the bench when a game starts, like they've been doing for the whole season, and see it from that side. Ned probably told you, I certainly didn't invent this little parable, but he uses it all the time. He says in class, "I cried because I didn't have shoes until I saw the

man that didn't have feet." I said, "You've got to think about that, the significance of what this says. Be happy with what you have, and don't allow yourself to excessively want that which you don't have. That's part of this whole thing, was you're sitting there, you're very fortunate because you guys get all the adulation and press and attention and all, and these guys are working out there every game, every practice, and they're making you as good as you are. Without their help, none of us would be as successful as we are." And it's just recognition, again, of what other people contribute to something.

Lage: That's a nice story of how there are more things than winning.

Newell: Yes. So these are all the kind of things we did. I don't know where they ever came from. It just seemed right to me. I didn't always do that, but when I got to Cal, I did it. I did other things, I guess, at other schools, but these seem to be the most imprinted on my mind.

Loss to Ohio State in the 1960 NCAA Finals

Lage: You have told me you learn more from losses than from wins. What did you learn from the loss to Ohio State in the 1960 Finals?

Newell: Well, I learned one thing--in fact, I learned it so well that I got on the NCAA tournament committee and I was able to get them to change the format for the Final Four. We used to play Friday and Saturday. I got them to make it Thursday-Saturday, and now it's Saturday-Monday, but to have the day in between. Up to then, you didn't have a day in between.

Lage: Right. Now the women are trying to get that day in between.

Newell: Well, they should, because--

Lage: It's punishing.

Newell: Well, I'll tell you what, here's what happened to us before the Ohio State game. This was on Friday, the Cincinnati game. They made a terrible mistake in the time of the Friday games. I'm not sure what time they started the first game, but we didn't start the second game until after ten o'clock at night. I had a post-game meal planned--. Now, you've got to realize our pre-game meal was at five o'clock, because we thought we were going to start at nine. In those days you ate four hours before the game because

they said steak and all that takes about that long to digest itself. That was kind of a common thing; I just had to go to what other people said.

Lage: Now they've changed all that, I'm sure, what you're supposed to eat. You ate a high-protein meal?

Newell: Well, meat, and steak, and baked potato, and a vegetable, and Jello, that kind of a thing, and some kind of a sweet dessert. Meat was absolutely essential, we were led to believe, anyway. So that's what we did, like everybody else.

Well, we ate at five o'clock. And the game ends up--we started actually after ten.

Lage: Why did it take so long?

Newell: Well, as I recall, after the first game there was some kind of a ceremony out there between games that took another fifteen, twenty, twenty-five minutes, and then the slowness of getting the first game going. I think they started at seven-thirty where they were supposed to start at seven. Anyway we were an hour late in starting.

We got off the court, the game ended about twelve-fifteen, twelve-twenty. And it was really a tough game. And all the press, and all that--

Lage: You were retiring, so wasn't there kind of an extra focus of attention?

Newell: Probably, yes. I'd already retired.

Lage: You'd announced it.

Newell: I'd made the announcement weeks and weeks before, but there was just the normal press. You've got the national press there, because the Final Four was getting to be pretty big even then. So I didn't get back into the dressing room until about one o'clock, quarter to one, and then we all went in the bus to home. We caught the end of the Cow Palace traffic, and we didn't get to the hotel until almost two o'clock.

Well, Maison Paul where we were supposed to eat closed at one. So we get off two o'clock, and we haven't had anything since five o'clock, and the players are hungry. There aren't many places to eat, so as a group, we just went down Market Street, and we found one of those beaneries that stayed open, and they ate there. So we probably got back to the hotel close to three o'clock. And just everything from that point on just went downhill.

I moved our breakfast to eleven o'clock in the morning, from ten to eleven, and I had made a mistake there, because I should have probably put it to twelve. But anyway, the players, some of them just hardly touched their food, because they'd eaten so late the night before, and they were sleepy, and they just weren't normal--it was just an abnormal situation.

Now, if we didn't have a game the next day, it wouldn't have been quite so bad. Then they could have slept in and not eaten until probably in the afternoon. But I had to eat by four so we'd be in some kind of a sequence, because now the next night, we started at eight o'clock. We have to have our pre-game meal at four, so I had to have the breakfast before noon.

So anyway, we were a step slow the whole game.

Lage: You came out slow.

Newell: Well, yes. We just were not physically and mentally sharp. I didn't realize it until after about six or seven minutes, because they did everything we wanted them to do. We felt we trapped them into something that we were really prepared for, and during the normal season, we'd have beaten them. But they were getting a layup they would never have gotten. Nobody got a layup on us with Imhoff in there, and with our back help. But everybody was just a half a step slow. Offensively, we didn't shoot well. I never at the time, and I didn't for years and years afterward, even refer to the crazy things that happened.

But I did tell, when I got on the first tournament meeting, I spoke to the issue, and I told them exactly what happened to us. I said, "It's probably happened to other teams too, and it's never come to your attention. It's not fair for the team playing the second game, because what happened to us could happen to any team."

Lage: Had Ohio State played the first game the night before?

Newell: They played the first game. They were home--hell, had had their meal and were sleeping by the time our game was over. They had no problem. When they left the arena, there was no traffic to speak of. When we left the arena, the thousands of people there left --you know how traffic backs up. Especially at the Cow Palace, because there aren't the arteries out of there. There's one this way and one this way, and that's it. So it was bumper to bumper all the way back to the hotel.

Lage: So these little mental and physical preparations--it's more physical--

Newell: Well, it was physical. It wasn't that we dwelled on it, and we didn't refer to it even. But Rene and I talked about it, how dopey we were at the pre-game meal. Guys that would eat anything that was put before them, they left half a plate of food in front of them. I couldn't believe that. But it was the fact they ate so late the night before, and it takes a while to get to sleep after the other game and all. So anyway, they did change the first game to Thursday, and we've never had that problem since.

Teaching Defense to Ohio State's Coach

Lage: Now, the other story that I read about that game was that you had actually helped the Ohio State coach with his defense. How did that happen?

Newell: Yes, that was true. Fred Taylor, the Ohio State coach, was an assistant coach at Ohio State when I was in the Big Ten. My assistant at Michigan [State], John Benington, who played for me at USF and was my captain there, was very popular and very well thought of by the other assistants. So when they'd come to scout us at Michigan State, John would invite them over to my place after the game, and we'd sit around and just talk basketball, even though they had scouted and all that. That was kind of a no-no; if you were a head coach in the Big Ten in those days, you didn't speak to assistants.

Lage: Oh, really?

Newell: Well, that was kind of the unwritten rule.

Lage: Was this because of the scouting or because of some hierarchy?

Newell: No, it was just that--you spoke to them, but you were--

Lage: You didn't socialize.

Newell: You were up here [gestures]. Out in the West, it was never that way. High school coaches and assistants and whatnot--I mean, you were a basketball coach. There was just a certain, I felt, haughtiness in the Big Ten. They were toO conscious of their positions.

Lage: That's interesting.

Newell: Yes. So anyway, they liked to come, because they could talk basketball, they were all young, eager coaches, and they could talk basketball. So

anyway, Freddy was one of the fellows that would come over. So they always felt comfortable asking me things, if they had anything on their mind, in these sessions.

So now he becomes a head coach at Ohio State, and I had a clinic up at Concordia College in Minnesota, I think it was. It was a big, big Midwestern clinic. I lectured four hours a day, two in the morning, two in the afternoon, for five days.

Lage: And who were the students?

Newell: All high school coaches all in that area; it would be about 300 or 400. And then they had football there too, but in those days, you only had one basketball coach and one football coach. Now they have a clinic, you may have five basketball coaches and if they speak an hour, that's a long time. In those days, I spoke twenty hours on the sport: you better know your sport, because you'll run out of jokes after a while.

So the first night I get there, Freddy and a young coach, Sharm Scheuerman, who was the new coach at Iowa; he replaced the Iowa coach, Bucky O'Connor, who was a good friend of mine.

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Newell: Very tragically, Bucky had been killed in an auto accident after going to give a noon speech one day. Sharm Scheuerman played for him. Because Bucky and I were so close, his players and my players knew of our relationship, and we'd talked to our teams about the other coaches in good terms. Iowa players at that time always felt that I was one of the good guys. Sharm was Bucky's assistant. He had just graduated and was his assistant. He was only about twenty-four. They made him head coach when Bucky was killed.

You know, when you're a head coach and you're that young, the first person you want to reestablish contact with was your coach, because he can help you so much. But Bucky was dead. So the person he first thought of was me, even though I had never coached him or anything. But that relationship was strong. I had spoken at the Iowa clinic for Bucky. They had a big high school clinic there in Iowa that I spoke at, because Bucky was the host of it.

So Sharm shows up at the Concordia clinic with Fred Taylor, both young coaches now. And Fred, I'll never forget him, says, "Pete, I have the best freshman team coming onto the varsity that's ever been in the Big Ten. Last year, we set a Big Ten record in giving up points. I know absolutely nothing about defense. I am convinced of it. If I want to learn about

defense, there's nobody I want to talk to more than you." Because I had talked with those young coaches at my place on defense a lot, ideas on how to teach and all that. So he said, "Would it be possible for us to meet with you every day?" Sharm was, as I say, with Fred, and I said, "Yes, I think so. But I have to speak from--" I think I spoke from nine to eleven every day. No, eight to ten, and then I'd speak from three to five, I think, in the afternoon.

Lage: Was this '59 that we're talking about?

Newell: This was '59, the summer of '59. So I would get off after lecturing for two hours, and I'd go to the hotel, and then we'd sit down, and I'd start with them. I'd go with them right through lunch, to almost three o'clock every day. So I'm lecturing here and I'm spending four hours there, and then I'm lecturing again. For five days, and I can hardly talk when it's all over. But they're young coaches, and older coaches helped me so much in my getting along in the profession that I never looked at it as any kind of an imposition of my time or anything like that. Even today, I'm still glad to help young coaches that don't have the opportunities to have help that I had. And I started with defense, and the importance of it, how to teach it. Every day, it was taken to another step.

Rematch with West Virginia at the 1959 L.A. Classic

Newell: In this same year, just starting the '59-'60 year, our team was playing in the finals of the L.A. Classic. And there's a game there that was really meaningful to me, and that was the West Virginia game. Because in the 1959 finals of the NCAA, the Final Four game, we had allowed their side trap to really bother us. But again, we played Friday and Saturday, and you had no chance to practice against any maneuver that the other team has. There was no time.

Lage: And you didn't have as much scouting either, did you?

Newell: No, we didn't know anything about them really until I saw them play in the Final Four. But then the adjustments you have to make are on a board, which never was ideal. I always want to walk out on the court so that you get the right angles, right positions, right spacing, and all that.

So anyway, technically it really bothered me. Even when we won the NCAA, I was going back to the hotel, with Dick Friendlich and Florence in the car with me. I said, "Boy, that really bugs me." "You just won the

NCAA!" I said, "I know, but just from a professional standpoint, I just felt I didn't really have our players equipped to handle what the other team did," that side trap. Because we hadn't run into it. But our players were real good at improvising out there.

And it bugged me, it technically bugged me. And I told my players in November when we were practicing, I said, "Now, I'm going to tell you one thing: when we play West Virginia, there's no way that side trap is going to bother us, but we've got to get through that tournament to play them."

Lage: And wasn't West Virginia also kind of implying that they should have won the game?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure. But they got off to a pretty good start on us. One of the things you, believe it or not, have to guard against when you're playing a team like that is shooting too quickly. We'd get an easy shot so quickly that we'd start to play a real fast game with them.

So I had to make some substitutions, and I would just take an extra swing at the ball, pass up the shot. Just get a little control and slow that tempo down. We went from eighteen-to-six, or eighteen-to-eight down to about thirty-to-twenty-three, or twenty-four. And we had control of the game.

But in the second half, they got us with this side trap, and we went from about a ten, twelve point lead down to about three or four. But it never got less than that, as I recall. People thought, oh, we blew it right at the end, but we didn't. And then we played the game pretty even--we'd go up by maybe six, five, six, seven, and they'd get it down to three. And then we were ahead one, and Imhoff had an easy shot and missed it, but he put in the miss, and gave us a three-point lead with about ten seconds to go. We gave them a concession basket at the end, with five seconds, maybe. So it was a one-point game, but actually it would have been a three-point game.

Lage: All right. So anyway, L.A. Classic; I interrupted you.

Newell: So we had a hell of a time--we beat Illinois the first game. Illinois was undefeated. Jerry Colangelo, who's one of the owners of the Phoenix Suns, and former general manager, even coach for a while there--he was a sophomore phenom, scoring a lot of points. He often recalls that game; he thought he was pretty good until that game. He said god, when he did get the ball, it felt like it was three guys on him. And if he did get off a shot, it was just trying to save the ball. He said, "I never had a worse day."

Well, we beat them; we beat Illinois by about twenty, and then we played USC, and we damn near blew that one. They were ahead of us six points, believe it or not. They were ahead of us six points with a little over a minute to go, and they had the ball. We won the game. I think I've told you about that game. I still don't know how we won. We stole the ball, we'd make the basket and they'd foul us, so now it's three. Steal the ball again, and they'd foul us, and we'd make the basket, and now it's even. Then we stole the ball again and then we won the game, as I recall.

Then we played West Virginia. There were just some little simple technical things we had to do that we did.

Lage: To work on this side trap?

Newell: Yes. Well, I never had a chance to practice it in 1959, but there were things that we were capable of doing. If I had thirty minutes with them, that game would never have been as close. We were ahead of them twenty-five points in the 1960 game.

Lage: Oh, wow. That's pretty decisive.

Newell: Well, we won by twenty-five, I think. And we played everybody. But Tandy Gillis held Jerry [West] to one field goal, and he only made the field goal in the last couple of minutes of the game.

Lage: That's incredible.

Newell: Yes, it was incredible, that's right. Our whole game plan was not only stopping Jerry but keeping the ball from him, and inviting other guys to shoot the ball. The other guys started to shoot the ball, and they found--they tried to back-door Jerry. We took away the normal pass and gave him a certain kind of a counter. The only counter we gave him, we anticipated their doing this, and so we intercepted a lot of passes. But what really vindicated me technically is that we just tore the trap apart, and we got them out of it in about seven, eight minutes. I think the first five or six times we got the ball, we ended up with about a ten-foot open shot. Tandy Gillis, I think, made three or four in a row on the baseline.

Actually, we did the same thing, but we didn't do it as crisply as we did with practice, with Denny Fitzpatrick, who was a great shooter, too. Denny was on the baseline, and he made a couple of shots there, but we never got the ball to him enough.

During this tournament, Jack Graff was the assistant to Freddy Taylor, and he has a list of things about this long--when you're talking basketball and all that, and then the other coach goes out and tries these things, there's a lot of things in between that you leave out, that are never brought up, and you can't dot all your i's, in a sense. So you have to do it and then find out what it was you didn't discuss.

Lage: What's missing.

Newell: Yes, what's missing. Well, he had a whole litany of things that were missing, and here I am preparing for this big game, that to me was a big game, although it was just a preseason tournament. But technically, it wasn't that I wanted to beat West Virginia or Jerry West or Freddie Schaus, their coach. That wasn't it at all. It was just that technically, when I'd get something like that that we didn't handle well, I never blamed the players. I just blamed myself, because I didn't have them better prepared.

So I spent more time with Jack Graff. He's there staying at the same hotel. We're staying at the Town House there in L.A. Every morning I go down for breakfast, there he'd be, and I'd spend my whole breakfast talking with him going over all these things. And then later in the season, the same thing would happen, but the litany was a lot smaller the second time. And then as things would happen, he ends up beating me in the final game of the NCAA, and his defense did it.

It's something that we talked about, the same thing I said about West Virginia. We had one player that wasn't that good an outside shooter. Ohio State didn't play him. He let that man go, and he doubled us inside. The other shots we got just weren't sharp. And this kid, he had a little trouble getting the ball. He just wasn't shooting well.

The California Defense and Reverse-Action Offense: Influences on Taylor, Jucker, Wooden, Bobby Knight

Lage: Did Taylor use your rebounding pattern?

Newell: Well, yes. Pretty much, yes. This team became a pretty good defensive team, real good defensive team. Now, let me explain. That's '60, okay? We beat Cincinnati in the first game. Now, the Cincinnati coach, George Smith--really nice guy--he retires, and Ed Jucker takes over as the Cincinnati coach, the assistant that was deriding us on the way we played--

Lage: Oh, yes.

Newell: Ed Jucker wins the NCAA at Cincinnati, beat Ohio State in '61, beats them again in '62, and should have won in '63. He had something like a fourteen-point lead with about eight minutes to go, and the kids got careless, and the other team got momentum, and they got beaten right at the end. Ed Jucker, as soon as he became head coach, he started playing the California power offense, as he called it; he wrote a book about it--because he won the NCAA twice in a row he wrote a book--and he freely said he played our same defense. In other words, we made a convert out of him. For two years, he was telling people that it was luck, or that we were going to do this and that. Then he became the head coach, and he turns around and he starts playing the same defense, and also using Cal's reverse action, which was kind of interesting to me. We became good friends.

Lage: Did you have any direct contact with him, or he just observed?

Newell: Well, after that I did, sure. But when he was an assistant, no. I did with George Smith. George was a nice man. I never did get to know Jucker until he became head coach, but it was a funny thing that here he was for two years, "Oh, that kind of basketball's never gonna go." And he wins two national championships playing that kind of basketball.

Lage: Did somebody like John Wooden take anything from the Cal style?

Newell: Defense, finally. Right at the end of my coaching career at Cal. The last game I coached against John, we had beaten them eight times in a row, and we had won the conference four years in a row.

Lage: And previous to your coming, UCLA had been fairly dominant.

Newell: Yes, they were a dominant team, yes. Sure they were. But after that last game, he kind of waited until I came out and he wanted to talk to me on something. So we had a short conversation. The thing he wanted to talk about was defense. He said, "I really feel, Pete, there's a lot I've got to learn about defense." In the Big Ten, they didn't really play defense, especially in the earlier years. They were great running the ball, fast break and all, but defense was just something they tolerated, they didn't get into it like we did out in the West. I've told this often that John learned that part of basketball from us, and we learned transition fast break, what he brought back from the Middle West, to our basketball out here. I think it's a fair statement.

Anyway, he did bring it up. Well, his assistant at that time was Jerry Norman, and I think Jerry had a great deal to do with their later adopting the

press defense. We were the ones playing the press, we were the press defense, and Jerry and my assistant, Rene Herrerias, talked about this. I invited them to have any discussion with us about defense. I never got a chance to talk to John on the defense, but he was the one who brought it up. He wanted to just talk defense with me.

We were the best defensive team in the country then, and our principles were fundamental. You know, Bobby Knight, those are his principles. That's how he learned them, because he was on that Ohio State team.

Lage: Yes, I wanted to ask you how you got close to him. He was only a sophomore on that Ohio State team.

Newell: Yes. Well, he was one of these great freshman they're moving up, with Jerry Lucas and Havlicek. He was on that team, and Freddy had told him at the start of the season that they were going to play California style of defense, and that he'd talked with me during the summer. Then as the season went on, Jack would come back with the things that we had talked about.

Lage: His corrections.

Newell: "This is what Pete says, and this is what Pete says." So I felt like I was another one of their coaches. And then when Bobby started coaching, he used reverse action. He used our defense, and I didn't even know him. The first time I met him was in San Francisco when he was coaching at Army. He'd been there a few years, and he came out to play USF and proceeded to get thrown out of the game. [laughter]

Lage: Right from the beginning!

Newell: Well, in the second half, he got a terrible, terrible series of calls. It was really a really bad series--it was really funny. I had never met him. But a good friend of mine, Stu Inman, who was a former San Jose coach and also later the general manager of the Portland Trailblazers, Stu had gotten to know him. Stu played our reverse action and our defense and the whole thing. He had the bible, too. Stu talked a lot with Bobby on basketball and kind of critiqued his teams when he was scouting back there in the East. But I had never met him.

So I was going to go to the Holiday Classic, I was down in San Diego at the time. So, I came up to San Francisco to see the double header. Stu had told him that we'd all get together at the Japanese restaurant and bar on

Bush Street--can't think what the name of it was. We used to go over there and drink plum wine. [laughter] So we all rendezvoused there.

Bobby came in, he'd been thrown out of the game, and of course he was really upset at the official. They had really missed a call, they had really missed it, and there was a series of calls--almost a riot. So anyway, we ended up closing the Japanese restaurant, I remember, at about three in the morning. Bobby doesn't drink, but I was drinking plum wine, as I remember.

Lage: Now, would Florence have been there?

Newell: No, just coaches.

Lage: You mentioned that he and Florence were good friends later.

Newell: Well, later, as we got to know him, yes. If you ever want to talk to him, mention Florence to him, and he'll go on for the next half hour. But in San Francisco, we were just talking basketball, and he was really anxious to talk. He was a bright young coach, and everybody had told me what a tremendous coach he was. I watched his teams, and I could just see that he had really an untalented team, that Army team. They weren't very tall, and they all looked like they were football players. But they played with a great deal of togetherness and with a great game plan. While they didn't have a lot of natural talent, they made great effort in understanding what it was they were trying to do. And they were tough; they were very good.

In fact, USF had a great team then. It wasn't a Russell team, but it was one of those teams about ten years after, when they had quite a group. Good season. So that was the first time I'd met him.

Lage: He already had learned your system through Fred Taylor at Ohio State.

Newell: Yes. Although Freddy didn't play our offense that much, but defense, and then he studied our system, and the more he studied--Bobby was very bright, very bright. He felt that the kind of material he had was the kind I had at Cal: we were not the most physically talented team, we just knew basketball. The educational requirements at Army and at Berkeley were similar. So he felt that--[laughing] he still says, "The least talented team that ever won the NCAA," he tries to get on my case, "was Cal." But he's not deprecating the team, but he's saying that from pure talent standpoint.

Lage: From star quality, talent.

Newell: We really didn't. But that's the way we played. I think some of our guys, if they played on other teams, would have been big scorers. Denny Fitzpatrick, for instance, he was a great shooter.

Lage: So you didn't promote one person.

Newell: No, we didn't. It was a team effort. It was all team.

Teaching the Game of Basketball

Lage: Is this kind of back-and-forth between coaches fairly common?

Newell: What do you mean?

Lage: All the sharing.

Newell: Not today. It isn't today. It's altogether different today. There are coaches that do, yes, but not as freely as we did then. When I'd go to the national meeting, my roommate was Howie Dallmar, the Stanford coach. During the summertime, Howie and his assistant and Rene and I would play a lot of golf. We'd go over there to Stanford and play with them, and they'd come to Walnut Creek, some of the places we'd play. So we were rivals in the basketball season, but it never impaired our friendship and respect for each other.

Lage: You seem so willing to share.

Newell: Well, guys shared with me, Ann, and I--

Lage: And you like to teach.

Newell: Well, teaching, yes. That's what I do best. And that's what I felt I always did best. I was all right as a bench coach, but to me, it's almost ludicrous, the way I approached coaching and teaching, to do it the way a lot of them do it now, where they're putting up fingers and putting up signs--

Lage: To tell what the play's going to be.

Newell: Just simply to capsule what the game of basketball is all about, it's a game of counters. You play a certain defense to counter my offense, and I've got to be able to see where you're countering me and where, when you counter somebody, either individually or collectively, you're giving something up.

And to be able to determine what you're giving up, and then exploit that. And now you've got to counter me, because I've countered you. It gets down to an individual basis, or a team basis.

Well, in basketball, generally the most that are involved in an offensive play is a screener and a cutter and a passer. That's the most. Sometimes it's one, sometimes it's two, sometimes it's three. But very seldom do you get more than three. And then there are only so many things that you can do defensively to me. You can overplay me here, you can switch your defense, you can play me aggressively, you can play me softly. Whatever it is that you're doing, it's up to me to read it and then react accordingly. So if you're switching in a situation, then I have to attack you as I would attack a switch situation, because a switch situation is different than a man, in terms of how you respond.

So all this leads up to teaching. That's what I was good at, and I'm still good at it.

Lage: So you teach the players to read the situations.

Newell: Yes. We teach it through repetition. The same thing in a classroom: repetition. You go out there, and you break your offense down into component parts--one-one, two-two, three-three, four-four. And in the course of teaching these various things, every conceivable counter that you as the other team could throw at me, we experienced in practice. So we learn as the season goes on to read it and to react better, more properly. At the beginning of the season, you don't read it properly sometimes and react wrongly. Other times, as the season goes on, it becomes less and less.

So when you get in the latter part of your season, it's very possible that you're able to read most any defense because we put it in a drill form and we had the defense do all these things. That's where I would come in. When they would not read it properly, I would point out why they didn't read it properly and how they respond.

Lage: How is it different today? What's the situation?

Newell: It's different today because it's like the old meat market and grocery store as opposed to Safeway and Vons--everything is packaged today, everything is five-man. Motion offense, flex offense, they don't break down. When I say break down, I mean these offenses don't lend themselves to the one-one, two-two, three-three, four-four reverse-action concept. With reverse action, I would be able to work on that triangle, when there was a mistake, why it was, and go through the repetition to correct the situation. Reverse was great at this. We'd have a screener and a cutter and a passer. Now, if you

have the three minds working at the same time, you're going to get a real good shot.

We would play our screener three different positions--not at the same time, but at various times. That would depend upon how the defense was playing our cutter. We'd have that cutter do any one of three things. When it was down here, sometimes we would cut across, sometimes we would fake here and come to the foul line, sometimes we would stop the slow screen. I'm just using that as an example.

I wanted my passer to read that defensive man, what he did, because I expected my cutter to read that defensive man, and I know my screener is reading it. If they all read it, the defensive guy is screened out. It's precise. But you just don't put it on a blackboard. What you do is you work every day, repetitiously, on these things.

So my players felt that they could get a shot any time they wanted on reverse action, if the defense played anywhere close to normal, and if they didn't my players would respond accordingly.

Lage: Now, if you were playing against the offenses that are being played now, would your defensive schemes work against them?

Newell: Oh, absolutely, yes. Because the defenses were tougher then, because there was more of a variety of them, and more variety of offense. See, this is one of my pet peeves with motion offense: it's the same rhythm, the same cuts, the same screens, and the counters are very limited.

Lage: Not as much variety.

Newell: No. And my theory of offense was there would be different speeds. I would have a slow speed, a medium speed, and a fast speed. I never wanted the defense to get in the same rhythm of playing me, which you do with motion. Now, motion would be fine if that was just one of your offenses, but if you had a quick-hitting offense, and maybe even a slower offense, that takes away the rhythmic response of the opponent. But when you're lecturing on that, it's almost like you're talking about how you put the nuclear bomb together to a bunch of high school dropouts. [laughs]

Lage: Now, you gave a clinic, did you, at this last NCAA?

Newell: Yes.

Lage: Who were you giving a clinic to?

Newell: To the college coaches, at the Final Four. It was great. I really enjoyed it.

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Newell: But the problem was, the room was too small. It only held a couple hundred, and there were about a hundred outside trying to get in. And then they didn't do a good job. I didn't have any visual aids. They didn't have anything set up.

Lage: You had to hold your fingers up.

Newell: Yes, I had to do that. I had behind me a big mirror, and I didn't even have a piece of chalk. They didn't even have a piece of chalk for me. It was ridiculous.

Lage: How can you give a clinic without--?

Newell: Well, it's tough. But I did it.

Lage: How long were you talking?

Newell: About an hour.

I spoke on half-court offense. I spoke on the various elements that are necessary to be efficiently operating on offense: spacing, and care of the ball, and things like that. But I also got into a lot of other things, and the one complimentary thing I told you about. That is almost like a strange language to them. Nobody ever speaks on that any more, and it used to be one of the most important parts of any game. How can you work your offense in such a way that you're going to be able to better defend on transition defense?

Lage: So that now is a novel idea?

Newell: Yes, it is. And right now, it's more important than it ever was, because of the three-point shot. Because you have to get back on defenses with some kind of a balance so that you can protect against a good shooter getting down there all by himself shooting. Before, when it was two points, you didn't worry that much about it. But that extra point is a big, big point. So transition defense has never been more important than it is since the advent of the three-point shot.

Lage: Were the coaches receptive?

Newell: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. They were upset that they didn't have these visual aids for me. When you talk about spacing, you have to have the dimensions of a court and things like that. And I talked about a couple of other things about understanding how to play the game when you're twelve points up with about eight, nine minutes to go. Do you stall, or do you play normal, or do you start to judiciously use the clock?

I have probably, in these last dozen years, been more noted for what I call false motion. Larry Brown and so many of these coaches at the college level--and at the pro level too--could use false motion. It isn't that important at the pro level, because of the twenty-four second clock. But how to be able to, with that kind of a lead, without stagnating yourself by stalling the ball, take time off the clock and still have your rhythm of offense and not allow your lead to evaporate in a matter of two or three minutes.

Simply what it is is, at that point when they're bringing up the ball and the other team starts to press you out. I want to take the decision away from the player dribbling the ball. By that I mean simply I'm going to put them in what you'd call a formation, a particular set, and it's what you call false motion. It's all predicated upon getting yourself into your normal spacing, your normal positions on the court when you're on offense. The reason for this is that you have your proper angles, proper distances for your passes, and the proper spacing for your players. So that if they back-door, this is from a normal spacing, you can handle it. If you try to back-door the defensive man and you're five feet out of your spacing, your angle is bad. That extra five feet gives the defense that much more chance to respond and to cut you off.

So to get from back court up to your normal spacing, that's what it's all about. And at the same time, take fifteen, eighteen, twenty seconds off the clock, and now be able to operate against the pressure defense from normal positions. But there are certain fundamental things you have to do. You've got to make sure that you don't bring two offensive men together, and the guy with the ball has to keep his dribble. It's a five-man movement.

I've found there are a couple of dozen other reasons for false motion other than just this. Sometimes if you're in foul trouble, you can shorten the half by going to it for twenty seconds. But if you just put a clock to it, if you hold the ball, if you can do this, and it's all motion, so it isn't just standing around dribbling the ball--that kind of a stall can stagnate you and you never get back to your offense.

But if you do this properly, if you want to put a clock to it, and if takes, say, twenty seconds to get up here, you still have another fifteen seconds to get your shot, which is plenty of time. If you take, say, twenty-

eight seconds each time to get your shot, and it takes the other team, say, twelve seconds to get theirs, that means between the two of you, forty seconds are off the clock. That means about every two minutes, the other team is going to get the ball three times.

Well, it's a percentage kind of a thing. If you're going up and down with them, and you don't take any time, they may get five shots in one minute. And if they're behind, that's the kind of game they want, because the more shots they get, the more chance they have of making them. But if you can limit the other team in the last eight minutes to--just to use a figure, say fourteen shots--and you're twelve points ahead. If they make 50 percent, that's seven shots. That's fourteen points. They would only have fourteen against the twelve-point lead you have. Well, if you didn't make but a couple of shots you'd be okay. It isn't quite like that, because there are fouls and things like that, but the point is that if you only get a few baskets, you control the tempo of the game and you win. If you didn't do it that way, they may have twenty-eight shots in the last eight minutes and get back in the game.

Lage: So this would stop those runs that teams tend to make.

Newell: That's exactly right. What I don't want is a player who is now being pressed by a defensive man in the back court now to be dribbling the ball. They're not all Jason Kidds in this game. Most of the kids are dribbling the ball up the court with the defensive man going full speed. Well, there are about six things that can happen there, and five of them are bad. Seriously. You can get a charge, you can mishandle the ball, he tries to throw a pass in an unnatural position with unnatural speed and it's intercepted, he can miss the shot, or he can make the shot. If the best of all things happens and he makes the shot, you're ahead. But he's taken only maybe six seconds off the clock. I don't want that. I don't want that kid to have to make that decision.

Now, when I get them into half court, then they run the things that we practiced against this pressure defense. And that's another thing about my speech: defense. If you pressed me, we wouldn't play reverse. We would play, when we get in our spacing, what we call straight-line action. It would be back doors, back-door our forward, bring our center, and use splits, open up sides. We would do the things that best combat that kind of defense. The motion offense they play against all defenses, the same offense, and it just doesn't work that way.

Like Arkansas, they have a big guy in the middle. They get that ball, and they don't do a lot of things out there, but what they do, they do well. That's the way we were. But if there was one kind of a defense, they'd

operate a little differently. If it was another kind of a defense, they operate another way, and that's the way we worked counters again.

Lage: Does Arkansas seem to have that flexibility?

Newell: Well, yes. Normally, they'll post up that big kid in the middle. If you start to extend them, he'll come out higher, and he'll become a passer. But the same idea. They'll start to cut him off, and he's such a good passer that he'll hit his teammates if the player's open. So as I say, it's a game of counters. If you want to counter me with a certain kind of defense, I've got to counter you with an appropriate offense.

Lage: It sounds like a chess game, the way you describe it.

Newell: It is like a chess or checker game, it's the same thing. But the point is, and this is where I depart from so many of these coaches, how do you counter? That's why teaching is so important: why, why, why, why? You do this because they did this. This is why you do it. Rather than, "Well, we're going to do this, we're going to do this, they're going to do that, they're going to do that."

Lage: So you're teaching your kids how to react.

Newell: I'm teaching my players to read what the defense is doing, take what they give us, and recognize what they're taking away.

Lage: One of those Oregon coaches, I forget which one, always has these numbers that he flashes.

Newell: Oh, I know it. I know. Well, geez, I mean--some of those guys, you wonder if they can read the number. But no, to me, that's almost hypocrisy. It's almost like he's saying, "I can't teach you, so I'm going to have to put out numbers." Now that, to me, is ridiculous.

Handling the Media

Lage: We want to get into the athletic directorship, but first let me just ask a couple of things. Do you have anything to say about how you handled the media as a coach?

Newell: Yes, I was very fortunate in all my coaching, I never really had a problem with the media. I had some good friends that were writers that I respected,

and even if they didn't agree with what I did, I had enough respect for them that I listened and didn't take it personally that they publicly said they didn't agree.

Lage: Of course, when you're winning, what can they disagree with?

Newell: Well, I didn't always win. The first year I was at Cal, I went one and eleven.

Lage: Was the media supportive then?

Newell: They were all right. See, I never read the papers much.

Lage: Okay, that's how you handled it.

Newell: Yes, I did. I told Bobby [Knight] that, too. If you don't read the papers what they write can't bother you. But I'll tell you what makes coaching so much tougher now than it ever was. One of the things is the influence these talk shows have over the ordinary public. And maybe some recluse that is mad at the world and he's just angry--everything is anti, everything is against. And people hear that, they don't factor in all the reasons that they shouldn't be swayed by this. But the fact somebody is saying it, may lead you to agree with him.

Lage: Everybody thinks they're an expert.

Newell: Yes. Well, that's what they say. The one thing everybody can do is coach a team and boil an egg, and that's about right. And then the growth of the game becomes so enormous, that it has spotlighted the coaches, and it's made them bigger public figures than we ever were, but it's also made them bigger targets. I mean, we could lose games--football was always the big target. Basketball wasn't that big a target. Now some places, basketball is a much bigger target than football.

A Cal Identity

Lage: Yes, depends on the school. What about alums at Cal? Did you have a way of dealing with alumni suggestions?

Newell: I never had a problem, no. The first year, it didn't bother. My brother went to Cal, and of course, I went to Loyola. I grew up actually being a real big Cal rooter, because when I was in about the seventh or eighth grade, my brother had to drive back up to school to pick up his Rose Bowl tickets.

Actually, it was the year that Benny Lom and Roy Riegels [wrong-way Riegels] were in the Rose Bowl.

Lage: Oh, the year of the wrong-way run?

Newell: Yes, the wrong-way run. My brother had left about eight tickets back up in Berkeley. He had to get them for people down in L.A. so he had to drive up to the fraternity house, and he took me. I had never been to Berkeley. He had an old flivver, old Ford, and it seemed like it took us three days to get up there from L.A. to San Francisco.

It was a tremendous thrill. First time I'd ever gone on that kind of a trip with just my brother. We stayed at the fraternity house, and I saw Cal. He was the house manager at Alpha Sigma Chi, I think it was. It's the one on Channing Way, right at the circle there. We spent about three or four days. I remember it rained like the devil all the time we were there.

But it was a real experience. I saw the Campanile, and he took me up to the top of the Campanile. It's something I never have forgotten. It was one of the main reasons I left Michigan State. See, when I left Michigan State, I took a big, big cut to come to Cal. I think I told you that.

Lage: Yes.

Newell: But money was never a big issue. I never made a decision based on money. As I look back on my life, I think it was probably the smartest thing that I ever did when I made those decisions based on other things. And Florence was tremendously helpful in those situations, because as I told you before, and you certainly know, that any time a family moves, especially when you have kids, it's the mother that is bearing the brunt of the move. The man goes from one business and social situation to another, whereas the mother has to make sure everything is packed and gone and received at the other end, and get the kids in the new environment and school, and wipe their nose when they come home because nobody knows them, and all those things. And here we just go from one athletic department to another, and the same situations prevail.

But she was really supportive, and made it so much easier. I would never have made some of the moves, I'm sure, on my own. But that one was a real tough one because I had three children at the time. I was one of the highest-paid coaches in the Middle West when I came to Cal. I took a one-third cut of what I was making, about 33 percent cut. And we didn't make the kind of money they make now, but relatively, I was up there pretty high. I was at a school where I was an associate professor, and I was told if

I stayed I'd be a full professor, which gave you a lot more security, tenure and money.

Lage: And at Cal, you were working for the ASUC.

Newell: Yes.

Lage: Did you object to that situation at that time?

Newell: No, but I did when they asked me to be athletic director. There was no way I'd ever have been athletic director under those conditions.

Lage: Did it affect the program? They changed it right when you became athletic director?

Newell: I never was conscious of the effect except that you never had any of the extras that some schools had. For instance, when we won the championship, we didn't get rings or anything like that, that other programs would give their players. We got a watch, I think, from the NCAA, but the watches were all the same every year. Rings or some identifying thing like that are what some schools got. We never had the money to do that. The student group would never give us the money. They had on campus at that time SLATE, which was the forerunner of Mario Savio, although they never bothered us in basketball. It wouldn't be fair for me to ever say that I was ever hindered in any way by the school support, student support. We were pretty popular among the students, because we represented all facets of the students.

But the first year I was at Cal, here I replaced a legend there, Nibs Price, a wonderful man.

Lage: And you weren't identified with Cal by others, even though you yourself identified with Cal through your brother.

Newell: No, I wasn't identified, and that first year I go one and eleven. I have a great freshman team, and three of the starters are black. They never had a black player there before.

Black Athletes at Cal and in Basketball

Lage: Now, did you get direct comments on that, or you just picked it up?

Newell: No, I picked it up. It would come back to me. Not many, though, in fairness. But the problem was, there was no place for a black athlete to stay. They didn't have any dormitories then except Bowles Hall, and a lot of the approved housing wouldn't take a black student.

Lage: You told me that, and I was really surprised.

Newell: Well, at that time they wouldn't. We're talking about 1954.

Lage: And it wasn't until '58 they got some new dorms.

Newell: Yes, that's right. But see, you had to depend on those approved rooming houses--and it was just that they always seemed to be filled. Robbie was one of them, Earl [Robinson], but he lived in Berkeley, so it was no problem for him. The other two I had, Bobby Tealer and Bob Washington lived nearby. I'm not exactly sure where, but it wasn't that far away. But then it's hard to get your other players because there weren't dormitories, and it was difficult to get them into some of the off-campus housing.

Lage: So that was one of the things--you kind of saw the changes that needed to be made.

Newell: Well, it never occurred to me. I had the first black player that played at Michigan State, Ricky Ayala, from New York. He didn't even come on a scholarship. I told you about him.

Lage: You told me about him; that's a wonderful story. So you have really seen this change in basketball, from being an almost all-white enterprise in the major universities.

Newell: Absolutely, yes. And Phil Woolpert, he was the USF coach. I feel he never got enough credit for what he did. Even when we were growing up, he was miles ahead of us in recognizing human rights.

Lage: You were on the team with Woolpert at Loyola.

Newell: Yes, and he was talking about things like this, none of us ever even thought about, and making us aware of these things. And then when he came to USF, about the same thing happened. He had Bill Russell, K. C. Jones, and Harold Perry. And of course, there was a reaction over there initially on that. I don't think directly to him, but they had never had a black player on the team. When I was at USF, I didn't have any black players on my team, but there were no black players in high school to speak of. Maybe one. There were no black players playing on that side of the bay. And we didn't recruit like you recruit now.

Lage: You said earlier that you didn't have a lot of success recruiting black players.

Newell: It was hard to recruit black players to Cal then, for a logical reason. There weren't many black gals that went there, and the players didn't want to go; and the gals didn't want to go because there weren't many black guys.

Lage: Just the social setting--

Newell: Yes, the social thing there. Now, UCLA at that time had dormitories where they could house the black athlete. We didn't have that, and that made it difficult. But as more black athletes came, more housing came, then more black gals came, and then more black students came.

Lage: And that happened while you were athletic director, to a degree?

Newell: It started, yes, when the dorms came, sure. And in football, we recruited more black athletes.

Lage: Was there a conscious effort to recruit, for equality reasons, to recruit more black students?

Newell: I never believed in that. I believed in trying to get an athlete that could handle the school's academic demands, and an athlete that made you better, whether he was black or white. But as I say, even then, there weren't as many black athletes.

Lage: As athletic director, did you have any problem with coaches who were not ready to accept black students?

Newell: Every now and then you'd run into it, especially in football. You'd run into a redneck. But you may not know about it. The head coach at Cal anyway, he'd square it away. But there's always going to be rednecks, there's always going to be black racists, and there's always going to be white racists. You hope that the numbers will be less and less as you go along. In basketball, in the Bay Area, I'd say in the forties in the Bay Area, the only black player I can remember playing at St. Mary's, Santa Clara, USF, Cal, or Stanford, was a player by the name of Tucker at Stanford. I'm not sure if that was late forties or early fifties. Could have been early fifties. Because Cal and USF didn't nationally recruit, they recruited from more or less the Bay Area and down in L.A. here. There were many more black athletes down here, but there were many more athletes period down here than there were up north.

Lage: I've read a lot about how much black players have changed the game of basketball. Is that something that you want to discuss?

Newell: Well, they have. Oh, yes. I've been asked a number of times. What was the biggest change that you've seen in basketball? Well, it's the emergence of the black athlete. He's so much more athletic, in quickness and jumping and things like that.

Lage: So the physical skills seem different to you.

Newell: Well, yes, the physical skills are much greater today than they were. I'm not sure that the teaching level is greater. Probably because [laughing] you had to teach the white players so much more. Not that you don't have to teach all players. I get a kick out of that. Something I'd hear from coaches a few years back was, "Well, yeah, you don't want to spend a lot of time teaching some of the black players, because they'll resent it, and they'll transfer on you." That isn't very common, but every now and then you hear such a thing. In my NBA camp, most of the players, not all of them, but most of the players are black players. I've never found any players easier to teach, or more receptive, or more wanting to learn.

Lage: It's really a disservice to them to--

Newell: Well, yes, it is. It's a put-down, basically, because the coaches are too lazy to teach, I think. It's not a racial put-down as much as it's just giving them a reason for not really rolling up their sleeves and going about teaching, a lot of them. Because teaching is effort, and it's tedious at times. But it's so rewarding when you see a player start to make these improvements, because he now understands the game.

Lage: But black and white aside, it seems to me that as the sixties came along and the seventies, kids were less willing to give in to discipline. Did you observe that?

Newell: Yes. I didn't coach at that time, but I recognized it.

Lage: Less respect for authority, maybe.

Newell: Yes. That was common in our whole society. It was a real change. And a lot of the coaches gave into that.

Lage: And you seemed to have so much authority as coach, moral authority.

Newell: Yes, absolutely.

Lage: Could you have maintained that in that different kind of atmosphere of the sixties and seventies?

Newell: I don't know. That's a very good question to ask. I don't know. If I couldn't, I wouldn't have coached, because I felt that I was always fair in my authority.

I remember John Wooden at UCLA in this period. He was catching, even from some of the authorities at UCLA, he was catching a little hell because he was demanding certain things that I felt he was totally right in demanding.

Lage: From his players?

Newell: Of his players. I mean, not any real problems for the players. For instance, just to give you an example: the dunk was illegal. He had a rule, and it was a good rule, that he didn't want dunks in practice or before games. He just didn't want dunks. He didn't want them to practice something that they couldn't play. Nobody can argue with that, whether he's white or black--it was not a white or black thing, it was just that it was against the rules to dunk, so why should you even practice dunking?

Well, a couple of the players, Wicks and Rowe, challenged him by dunking, and he didn't start them in the next game. John caught some flak from his authorities.

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Newell: It was fair, and the punishment fit the crime. It didn't quite even fit the crime; maybe it should have been more. But whatever it was, it was fair.

Lage: It was legitimate.

Newell: Yes, it was a legitimate expression of a coach showing that he is the coach. I agreed 100 percent with him.

Well, there was a little administrative reaction to it at the time, because there was a sensitivity to the black athlete, and both these players were black. There was a feeling that you had to back off on these kinds of things. Well, that was, to me, totally wrong. You don't want to treat a white player any different than a black player, or a black player any different than a white. Well, white players, you do the same thing. You couldn't say, "Well, yeah, you can discipline a white but you can't a black." It isn't fair to the black player. It's got to be an even field you're playing on.

But I remember at the time that he got some censure for it. It didn't change him. Thank God it didn't. But at that time, we had too many coaches that were giving in to these kinds of pressures.

Lage: Would this have been the seventies, or the sixties?

Newell: Seventies. That was early seventies.

The Hamburger Five

Lage: Well, Wooden had some trouble with having so many good players that they rebelled because they couldn't all start, I understand.

Newell: Of course, he didn't invent that one. That's been the case since the game began. That's one of the things I was telling you about, the importance of the twelfth man. That's what I always felt. I told you about the Hamburger Five in Michigan, didn't I? I never believed in that, but some coaches did, obviously. You get steak because you started, you get hamburger as a reserver.

Lage: Different food for different players?

Newell: Well, Pete Elliot and Bump Elliot were both great athletes. Pete was the football coach at Cal, and Pete told me this story.

Lage: And Bump was a brother?

Newell: Yes, a brother. They were both football players, and they were both basketball players. But Pete was a better basketball player than Bump. Pete was in the first team and Bump was in the second. They're playing in the NCAA in New York. They come down for their pre-game meal at the Paramount Hotel, and the coach is standing there as they'd come in, "You sit over there, you sit over here."

When he got the ten guys seated, there were the five starters sitting on one side, and opposite them were the five second-stringers. And now they're bringing the food, and the waiter is bringing a steak here and a hamburger here. Well, it ends up with the five steaks on one side of the table for the starters and the five hamburgers on the other, for the second stringers. Pete is telling me the story, and he says, "Right across from me is Bump, and Bump is looking at my steak, and you can just see his eyes, and his mouth is watering a little. So I cut off some of my steak and gave it to him." [laughing]

They became known as the Hamburger Five, these second string players. And it became a word that you used at that time, "Oh, he's a

hamburger." [laughter] That was the real put-down of a player. If you're a hamburger, you weren't very good.

Lage: That is very interesting, and it kind of corresponds to what you said about not speaking to the assistant coaches, this hierarchical setup.

Newell: Yes, that's right. So that's where the Hamburger Five came from. But I always felt that you have to have one level.

Lage: Well, how about taking a little break here and then we'll come back and talk about the 1960 Olympics.

Newell: All right, great. [tape interruption]

Lage: I am always hearing references to your twenty or thirty cups of coffee and three packs of cigarettes. Was this really true?

Newell: Well, that's why I got out of coaching, because I didn't eat properly--

Lage: And you didn't eat during the tournaments?

Newell: No, I couldn't eat. I never ate from Thursday to Sunday, when we played Friday-Saturday, I just couldn't. You see, I never got technicals. My team never got coaching technicals. You keep a lot of that in. Some guys would run up and down, they're yelling at the officials--I never did that. I used a towel as kind of a crutch. [telephone interruption]

VII COACH OF THE 1960 U.S. OLYMPIC BASKETBALL TEAM

Coaching the Victorious Division I College Team in the Olympic Trials

Lage: Your last coaching job was Olympic coach in 1960. That sounded like a great experience.

Newell: It was a great experience. However, the offer came right after the final game against Ohio State that night, and I was really depressed--naturally, when you go that far and lose the final game. I was sorry for the team. I had so many new players for the first time in the final game. I really wanted them to get the enjoyment of winning and the things that go with it for a player, the championship watch and things like that.

Lage: And you probably wanted to go out on a winning note, also.

Newell: Well, I did, but that was never a major motivation. I never had any illusions about myself. I knew when I did good and when I didn't. I didn't need anybody to tell me. I didn't need any watch or anything to look at and say, "Well, I did a good job." But I just felt really low because of the circumstances that my team got caught up in, and things that you can't say anything about at the time, because it sounds like sour grapes. So you just take your lashings, in a sense, and just bare your back and shut your mouth. But for the players, I felt very sorry that they'd got caught in a situation that none of us could have prevented. It was beyond our control, and there's no way to know that everything would run so late that night. Probably, as I think back, I should have had an alternative site to eat, but that wouldn't have changed much, because we still didn't get back there until one-thirty in the morning.

Lage: Did you talk to the players about your feeling that this was the problem?

Newell: No, no, I would never do that, because that's negative. No, if you give teams reasons for feeling sorry for themselves, they will. No, you just have to fight through those things, and each in his own way. But once you start to say, "Well, gee, they got an advantage because they're this or that," then you're kind of throwing up the white flag. No, I never would do that. I wouldn't allow myself to.

Lage: This was in retrospect.

Newell: It was after the game when I thought, "What happened?" We played twenty-nine games and win twenty-eight of them, and we do things for the whole twenty-nine games, and all of a sudden we don't do it for one game. Why, why, why?" And the more I thought about it, the more it just hit me. They never had the proper rest. We never had the proper schedule, and we just were a step short. And I carried that feeling over into the next year when I had the scheduling of the NCAA finals changed. I didn't change it, but I certainly was the outspoken critic of the scheduling system at that time.

But to get back to the Olympics, I came home from the Ohio State game, and it was about midnight, I guess. Florence and I were just sitting down. The phone rang, and it was a fellow by the name of Dutch Lonborg, who's the athletic director at Kansas. Wonderful man, former basketball coach, one of the most respected men in college athletics. I had known Dutch for many years. "Pete," he said, "how about coaching our team in the trials?" "Oh," I said, "Dutch, no way. I'm just so damned depressed right now about the way the game turned out. I just can't even think of coaching." He said, "Well--" and we talked and talked. I was unbending. He finally said, "Well, just think about it and I'll call you in the morning. Sleep on it." I said, "I don't think I'll change, but fine, if you want to."

Well, Florence talked me into it. She said, "Yes, the way you feel now, but that isn't going to change anything. That's not going to change, and the opportunity to participate in the trials and maybe win would make you the Olympic coach." In those days, you didn't appoint the Olympic coach, as you do now.

Lage: How did it work? It was a different system?

Newell: I was the first college basketball coach coaching a college group to ever be the Olympic basketball coach. You had to win the trials. It wasn't written anywhere. At that time, the AAU [Amateur Athletic Union]--the Phillips 66 Oilers and Peoria Caterpillars and the Wichita Vickers and the Akron Goodyear, those were out in the Middle West, the top AAU teams. They were the equivalent of pro teams right now, at least some of them. They

were the career avenues for many basketball players when they graduated from college.

Lage: So it was an industrial league?

Newell: It was an industrial league. The trials were in Denver that year, and they had eight teams that qualified. They had the champion NCAA team, Ohio State. They had the NAIA [National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes] all-star team; that's two. They had an armed services team; that's three. They had a Division 1 team, which was mine; that's four. They had a Division 2 and 3 all-star team; that's five. And then they had three industrial teams. The industrial teams had their tournament the week before. It was the national tournament. They were allowed to take players from that tournament and add them to their team.

Lage: So they became kind of an all-star team.

Newell: Well, they had the basis of their own team, but then they would add these other players, and most of them were college players that were playing on the various teams that didn't qualify for the NCAA final eight. So they really loaded up. I had the college team, the Division 1. Colleges had never won the trials, for a very obvious reason. The trials were always held on AAU turf. They always had AAU officials. They always had international rules. And they always had the tournament at a time that was favorable to them, a week after their AAU tournament. They were a team and playing together, and the NCAA always was an all-star team. I had two days to get the team ready--well, three days, but one of them was just organizing.

Lage: And who picked the all-star team?

Newell: Well, you had an NCAA group. You had a group that picked their own team. The team that beat us, Ohio State, represented the NCAA Division I. Cal would have been the entrant if we had won.

Lage: So Ohio State entered as a team?

Newell: Yes, Ohio State did. But I had the all-star Division 1, and Division 2 and 3 were all-star teams too. I forget who coached them.

Lage: And you had three days to practice?

Newell: Three days, yes. And then we played Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Now, the AAU always won. As I say, they had their officials, their rules, their turf. And to make it even tougher, we were playing at Denver, which has the altitude problem. But I had an outstanding group of college players

that year. Even Bill Russell's team in 1956, when he was a senior, was beaten. It was K. C. Jones and all those fellows. They were on the all-star Division I team, and they were defeated in the trials.

Lage: The cards were stacked.

Newell: Yes, the colleges had so many things against them. Well, I'd had a little experience playing in altitude, and the first couple of days, I really ran our guys real good, spent a lot of time just running them, because what happens when you play in altitude, you start to spit cotton after about four or five minutes. The light air and all of that. It's just like you're running in sand all of a sudden. Because I had such a talented team, Jerry West and Oscar Robertson, and Darrall Imhoff was one of our players. I just gave them very basic, simple offense. Defensively, I concentrated a little more on that, because that's something that, with that kind of a team, you can help them with. Offensively, you kind of get out of their way as a coach if they're really talented.

You're more worried about the spacing of your players so that, if you've two players operating together in what's called a two-man game, the other three fellows are spaced away so that they have room to operate. You get two good players together, and you bring two others over there, and then you've got two extra defensive men in the area. So you want to space away from where you're trying to attack the other team.

But we did things, and as I say, having these players, although Russell and Jones and those guys couldn't win in 1956. Because we had these name players, they just rigged the whole thing. We played the Phillips Oilers the first game, and the second game we played Wichita, and the third game we played, for the championship, the Peoria Caterpillars. They had won their AAU tournament.

Lage: Now, when you say they rigged it--?

Newell: Well, they had the thing rigged so that for us to win the trials, we had to beat all three of those AAU teams, which were the best teams, because of all their rules there, all that stuff. Plus they loaded up, plus they were really good to begin with. But we were good, too, and they didn't know we were that good. We ended up beating every one of them over twenty-five points. It was amazing.

Lage: And that was the first time?

Newell: That was the first time the college team had ever won.

Selection of the U.S. Team Members[1]

Newell: Well, that made me the Olympic coach, but they didn't let me get in on the team selection process.

Lage: Was the core this team that you won with?

Newell: The only thing, they let me speak to the selection committee, and I said, "I hope you don't depart from the usual practice just because we're the first college team." I had five players. I had started Imhoff. My second center maybe had been a little better-- Walter Bellamy, who played at Indiana, and later was an all-pro for a number of years. But he was great coming off the bench for me. He had a great series of games. I brought him off the bench not because I was playing favorites, but I brought him off the bench because we needed points off the bench. Imhoff was more of a defensive player, really, at that level, and Oscar was as well. I didn't need an offensive center. I needed more of a screener and a shot blocker starting at center.

So when I'd take out Oscar and Jerry, Bellamy would be one of the guys who'd go in, because I'd lose so much scoring with those two on the bench.

Lage: Let me just ask you about the selection of the team. You said you didn't get in on it. Were you happy with how it came out?

Newell: Yes. Yes, I started to tell you. They tried to say, "Well, Bellamy played better than Imhoff, so he should start." I said, "Listen. You've taken the five starters historically, and if you don't take the five, and you don't take some other players too from that team, you get another coach, because I'll resign and I'll tell them why." Because I wasn't all that high on the job, even though I was glad we won the trials for the first time and broke that monopoly. But I let them know, and they were scared enough that they didn't want to get in that controversy, because the AAU and NCAA had been fighting for some time anyway.

Lage: So you wanted more than five players from your all-star team?

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[1]Team members included Oscar Robertson, Jerry Lucas, Jerry West, Darrall Imhoff, Terry Dischinger, Jay Arnette, Walter Bellamy, Lester Lane, Allen Kelly, Bob Boozer, Adrian Smith.

Newell: Well, yes. All other teams that had won the trials got seven or eight. Well, they only gave me six. I had a guard that hit eighteen out of twenty-three shots during these three games, who was outstanding. He came off the bench for me, but he deserved to be picked. They didn't pick him.

Lage: They wanted to get those industrial players in?

Newell: Well, two of them they put on my Olympic team, neither one of them ever played much in the Olympic Games. They both announced retirement during the all-star games. One of them was from Phillips, and the other--I'm not sure who he played for.

Lage: They didn't even travel with you, or--?

Newell: Well, what I'm saying is, they announced retirement, and they got picked because Phillips had a fellow on the selection committee who worked for them. It was very important for Phillips and these other big industrials to have Olympic players because of all the notoriety the Olympic team would get. And it's logical. They're spending all the money for advertising, they want the best advertising in the Olympics. So they had a guy that protected them. This guy got one player on the team, and he was hurt, because he never was in shape to play. When we had the early practices, conditioning and all that, he went down and the other fellow went down. They were both good players, but they were past their time. They had passed up some really good players that were younger and more deserving, really, but they weren't with these marquee teams. So I had two of those.

But I ended up with six of my players, and Jerry Lucas from Ohio State they had to take, because he was outstanding. That was seven. A guy by the name of Adrian Smith, who was from the service team, and he was excellent. He was very good. That was eight. Then two players that were outstanding in AAU ball. One of them was Lester Lane, and the other was Bob Boozer, who later played for a number of years in the NBA.

Lage: I have a name, Terry Dischinger?

Newell: He was one of my starters. He was one of my five players.

Lage: Where was he from?

Newell: Purdue. He's a dentist now in Portland. He was eighteen years old, and so was Lucas. Jay Arnette was also selected as a starter on my trial team. We were the youngest Olympic team ever, because we were the first college team. Yes, they were both eighteen. I think Bellamy was nineteen. At that time, it was unheard of to have somebody that young on the team. But our

starting team must have averaged about nineteen years old, because two of them were eighteen, one was nineteen, and Oscar was twenty-one I guess, and Jerry twenty or twenty-one.

Lage: Were the players you were facing when the Olympics came around equally as young, or did they tend to be older?

Newell: Oh, no, they were all national teams. You mean from the other countries?

Lage: Yes.

Newell: Oh, no. See, nobody has the system--only Japan is the closest to our system, interscholastic, intercollegiate. Most of them, they just go with clubs--

Lage: They go from high school to clubs?

Newell: Clubs. And even in high school, they're in clubs. Clubs support the athletic program.

Lage: I see, so it's not through the schools.

Newell: No, no. Except Japan; they have an interscholastic collegiate program. That's about the only one. There are some with college competition, but not the same as we do and Japan does. The clubs are very, very prominent in Italy, and all over Europe and South America.

Lage: And some of our college players go over there and play.

Newell: Oh, sure. Now they do, yes. Those days, though, the clubs were the dominant ones, and in South America very, very much, in Brazil particularly.

The Tripartite System of Team Preparation

Lage: So what did you learn about coaching an all-star team? How did you approach it?

Newell: I had coached some all-star teams before in these all-star games. But it was different. This was more like a regular team, because you had more practice days. We had twenty-eight days from the time we got together until the Olympics began. I'm trying to think how many games they scheduled for us.

I think five games, in this country, and then two in Switzerland on the way to Rome.

Lage: Just to give you practice?

Newell: Yes, to get you ready. But we had to play with the European ball, which was like a volleyball. It wasn't a basketball. We had to make that adjustment.

Lage: That would be hard, I would think.

Newell: Oh, it was hard, it was a little smaller, and it had a smooth surface, with no pebble on it. Like a volleyball, you know how smooth it is?

Lage: Yes. It would throw your shot off, I would think, and your dribble--

Newell: Oh, yes, it slid a lot. There were so many lines on it, it slid a lot. We had to adjust to the ball. We found out it was a good ball to bank. It banked better than our balls, because our balls slid a little. It was light on the board. The long shot, it had a tendency to sail on you, and a real accurate shooter would have a little trouble.

We practiced at West Point. They had no transportation really set up, and they made these games fundraising efforts for the Olympics. So we had to go and play in Dayton, Ohio, and then we'd fly back. And then we went to Morgantown, West Virginia, Cincinnati--well, New York wasn't bad. We broke camp in New York. We broke there, and we came in to New York City, stayed at the Roosevelt Hotel, which was the Olympic headquarters. We played one game against Tucker Tapes, a big New York AAU team. We played all AAU teams. Five of those games we played.

But we had to fly back, fly and fly. The only reason we were able to get as much practice time as we did was because one of the guys at West Point knew some general or colonel and was able to get us free rides for my team to these various locations. We'd fly and play the game, and then fly back. Then two days later we'd fly and play and fly back again. It was terrible. We didn't want to make a tour, because there was so much I had to do and so little time to do it.

So we weren't very good initially, because I was really working on conditioning and the organizing. The way I see it, the way you prepare a team, I call three segments. First conditioning and then early organization and finally refinement. In college, we had six weeks for this. It's a step process: conditioning must always be first, then organizing your offense and

defense, with teaching. The refinement is smoothing the rough spots and special situations.

I didn't have the six weeks preseason the NCAA allows. I had to do it in almost a ten- or twelve-day period. So the first three or four days, I really worked them hard in conditioning, because I felt that we were really going to have to depend on that. Russia was claiming the gold medal already, because they didn't know any American college players. They were only used to those AAU players who did all the traveling and played in all the international competition.

Lage: So they didn't know anyone on your team?

Newell: Not really. They weren't that aware of Oscar, Jerry, no. And a lot of Europeans didn't, because all they knew were the old standby AAU players that had been going there for years and representing American teams in that competition over there.

But we got adjusted to the rules better, and we got better conditioned, and we got more cohesive, and we just got better and better and better and better. Then when the Olympics started, we were still a little away, but we were improving. I wasn't that concerned. And then we had to play Italy the first night, in Italy, and that's of course always tough. They were pretty good. They really could shoot. Most of those Europeans shoot well outside.

Lage: Why is that, do you think? Is it just that they focused on it?

Newell: Because they don't jump like our guys. They don't play around the basket as well. Our guys depend too much on the jump, dunking and that stuff. Just like the Asian countries, the Asian countries shoot better than we do outside, Korea--I'd take three Korean players and I'd go through the NBA, and I guarantee you I'd beat them. They were about five-nine, five-ten, and they just buried that ball like it was a foul shot. Because that's where they develop the game. Around the basket, they get everything blocked, so they developed the outside game.

Lage: So they worked on that.

Newell: They worked the outside game. Our guys would stay inside working on that, and they don't shoot that much outside.

Lage: I took a look at that Joe Burris story ["Dream Team I", Boston Globe, July 23, 1992]. He mentions that you had trouble with a motionless offense, getting them to move.

Newell: Oh, yes.

Lage: How did you deal with that?

Newell: I had on my starting team, I had Oscar, and Jerry West, and Jerry Lucas, and Terry Dischinger, and Lester Lane. They were all big scorers on their team. They had the ball about 50 percent of the time on their teams. What little math I knew, I multiplied five times 50 percent, I found out I had a team that had the ball 250 percent of the time. [laughter] So I had to get a rhythm of offense. I was trying to figure out how can I get us going and moving without the ball. They're all waiting for the ball. If they didn't have it, they were all waiting. That's what they were used to.

So I just invoked this. I said, "Now, I don't want anybody shooting until I blow the whistle. I'll tell you to start; when I say start, start. When you hear the whistle, the next guy that has a good shot--make sure it's a good shot--can take it. But until then, I just want you to pass, move, screen, cut, do whatever. But move." Sometimes I'd go three minutes before I'd blow the bloody whistle, just to get them in the habit of moving, just moving, moving.

I did that for about two or three days, and pretty soon we got a nice, fluid movement with the team. But so many of them weren't used to moving without the ball. They were used to having the ball, and Oscar dribbling the ball, and all.

Lage: Were they willing to give that up?

Newell: Yes, sure. They never said anything. I had no problems with them that way.

But as I say, the offensive part was just getting them to kind of a rhythm, move, because once you get a fluidity to what it is you're doing, then your ability to see the situation and react properly takes over. That's what happened to us. We just got better.

The 1960 Olympics in Rome

Newell: Then we get over there, and we beat the Italians by about twenty-eight points, or so. I thought that it was a close game. I never looked at the score in the game. I'd have sworn it was a three-point game, and here we're ahead twenty-three. But it seemed like they kept shooting the ball

from thirty feet, and even though there wasn't a three-point shot then, it seemed like all they did was make every shot.

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Newell: There were a lot of turnovers, and we'd get some easy baskets, sometimes get a lot in a row, and you forget how many you did get, and you think the game's closer.

But then--it was really funny, I'll tell you a funny story there. Paul Zimmerman was a very eminent sports writer and sports editor of the L. A. Times here. He was over there, and I knew him, and he was a nice guy. He'd come up before the Italian game, and I said, "Jeez, Paul, we're playing here in Italy, playing with their ball, we're playing their rules. I don't know what these officials call and what they don't call. Everything is new to us. So I don't know, but I think we'll beat them." So we beat them by twenty-seven, twenty-eight, thirty maybe.

The next game we're playing Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia had just played the Russians. The Yugoslavs always gave the Russians trouble, and the Russians were claiming the gold medal before it ever started. They had just a slug-fest out there, and the Russians won, but only by a few points. It was a really tough game. We're playing the Yugos the next game.

So Paul Zimmerman comes up to me, and I said, "Well, you know, they played the Russians really tough. The Russians have given themselves the gold medal, so obviously, we've got a real tough game on our hands." So he puts his pencil away.

Lage: You told him this?

Newell: Well, yes, I told him, see, because I kind of expected it. I didn't know how good they were.

We were ahead of them seventy-six to eighteen at half. Seventy-six to eighteen! And then we won the game by about 125 to seventy-five, something like that. Easily fifty, sixty points. And they were good, but they didn't even care about beating the Americans. They figured they couldn't beat us anyway, and they didn't, but the Russians were a different story. They hated the Russians, and so they didn't have much energy left the next day when they played us.

So now we're playing the Japanese, and the Japanese have never won an Olympic game. I just had told him about, "Jeez, the Yugos," and we beat them, as I say, fifty, sixty points. So he's a little skeptical now, a little

cynical too. So these Japanese were about that big [gestures]. So he comes up to me, he said, "Now, you're playing the Japanese tonight." "Yes, I am." He said, "Now just tell me how you can ever conjure up in words how they can be any threat to you." I said, "They're tricky. Remember Pearl Harbor." [laughter]

He took his pencil and threw it down, or pen, and just walked away. [laughing] We talked about it later. He said, "I thought I finally had you, and you come up with that Pearl Harbor bit." So anyway, we won.

The Missing Bus After the Semifinal Game

Newell: I'll tell you what was really an alarming thing that happened in the Olympics. We won, I think our average total differential was fifty-nine points, close to that. We're playing the semifinals in the new palazzo, I guess they called it, brand-new place. We had played the others in the smaller place. It was way away from the Olympic Village, and you have to play Friday and Saturday night, and Saturday night is the gold-medal game. The four teams in there are Italy, Russia, Brazil, and ourselves. Now, we had beaten all of these teams.

Lage: You had already beaten them?

Newell: Yes, but we were in the final four now. But your other games still count, the point differential and all that stuff.

So we're playing the Italians, and they have played well. So we play them the second game. Russia plays Brazil, and Brazil upsets Russia.

Lage: So then you're playing Brazil?

Newell: Yes in the final. After we beat Italy by about thirty-five. After the game against Italy, we go up in the dressing room, and they had some Cokes for us, but that's about all. We didn't really expect anything either. They didn't do anything about post-game meal or anything like that.

Lage: Just on your own.

Newell: You're on your own, yes. And there's nothing you can do. They don't give you a manager or anything like that. And the eating places are closed, and it isn't like you can go into a McDonald's; you just don't eat, that's all. Go to bed hungry.

But anyway, now--and we want to let the crowd kind of disperse, too. So now we're in our uniforms, ready to go back to the village. So we go out, and I send the manager to spot up the bus. Not a manager--there was a kid from one of the Ivy League schools that I had at my camp there, and his dad sent him to the Olympics. He said, "If I get there, will you let me manage?" I said, "Yeah, but I don't know how you're going to get in the village and all that. But sure, I need you." He said, "Well, I'll get there, and see if you can't get me in the village. If you can't, I'll get in some way."

Well, I got him in the village. I forget how I did it, but he slept on the floor. He was happy just being there. I let him sleep in our quarters, but he had to sleep on the floor because there was no bed for him. And it was a hell of an experience for him. I think his dad was a very wealthy guy, could have bought Italy at the time.

But he comes up and he says, "I can't find the bus." I said, "What do you mean, you can't find the bus?" He said, "I've gone all the way around the whole--" there was a big circular building, and also a circular parking area. He says, "There's no bus anywhere. There's nothing out there. There's no cars, there's no bus. There's no bus. And even the people have all left." And there's no phone, and you wouldn't know who to phone anyway. So I said, "Well, you've got to be kidding. There's got to be--" "No," he said, "Coach, there isn't."

So we go out there, and he's absolutely right: there's nothing. So you've got to do something, so I said, "Let's start walking. Maybe we can run into a taxicab or something." Well, we walk, we're in kind of a residential area, business and residential, not downtown or anything. Had no idea, had no idea, where the Olympic village is. I've never been there before except on our buses, and never from the palazzo.

So here comes a city bus, now it's about midnight. After midnight. We had to play the second game, the finals, the next night. None of us speaks Italian. It's up to me to improvise. So the bus driver stops, and here's all these great, big, tall basketball players with USA sweatsuits on. So I go, "Olympico Villagio, Olympico Villagio," I have no idea where the Olympic Village is, but it sounded as close as I could come. And he's looking at me like this, "What is this guy talking about?" I guess he recognized I was an American, and he knew USA. But it was filled with people going to work or coming from work. Nobody spoke any English in the bus. Nobody offered to come up and help us.

So, "Olympico Villagio, basketball, basketball, okay." [in accent] So we got on the bus. I told everybody, "At least we can sit down. This is going to be an experience. We don't know where he's going, and we don't

know how good my Italian is, and we don't know if this guy is a Russian or what he is. We may end up in Siberia or someplace." So anyway, we kind of made fun out of it.

But I'm getting worried, because we're driving and we're driving and we're driving, and then I walk up, "Olympic Villagio." He just nods.

So finally, some of these areas are kind of familiar, and he's still staying on his route, and people are getting up and going off, and they're looking at us when they get on; here's all these funny-looking people with these funny uniforms on. Finally, he stops and gets out of the bus and tells us to come. He points down this way. Well, it's about four or five blocks away, but we know we're in the vicinity of the Olympic Village.

So now it's about two o'clock, we get back to the village. [laughs] I'm saying to myself, "You know what will happen. We'll come into the village, the whole team walking in, and some writer will say, "Jeez, they were out all night." Which was true, but not the way it would come across. But nobody made any remarks, except me.

I found out that--see, in the AAU, they had these guys that contributed a lot of money to the AAU, so they made them managers of various things. They would bring their wives and get a free ride. They'd contribute $500 and get $2,500 worth of tickets and hotel and transportation for their lousy contribution. And then they would commandeer things. I told our bus driver when we arrived for the game, "You be here," but again, we didn't have any interpreter. "You be here," "Okay, okay, okay." "Basketball team." "Okay." Well, if you talk louder than the next guy, they'll pay attention to you, or if he talks louder, they pay attention to him.

Lage: So the AAU people--?

Newell: The AAU people and their wives commandeered these buses to take them back to the village. When I got back, it was about two-fifteen now, and I went storming in, and I practically knocked down the door of the head guy there.

Lage: Of AAU?

Newell: Yes. And I made such a racket, I woke up everybody. I spiced it up pretty good with language that he understood. He had no idea what--

Lage: And you didn't have to speak Italian then? [laughs]

Newell: No, no. But he had no idea what happened. And of course, he wasn't in favor of it, but it had happened, and here we got--and I just scared the hell out of him. I said, "We're playing for the gold medal tonight, and God help you if we blow that gold medal. You better be out there rooting like hell for us, because here's my players getting in at two-fifteen, two-thirty, getting to sleep maybe at three o'clock, all because of a lousy organizational screw-up. You should have buses for the teams that are competing, especially when they have to play the next night--"

Lage: And a meal.

Newell: "How can you expect me? That's your job. My job is to coach and get them ready. I do that, and then I get screwed up because of somebody like you screwing up your end of it." "Well, I'm sorry, I'm sorry--" "You should be sorry." I really was upset. I was so damn mad I kicked every damn door. There were about five doors there, I kicked every one of them, made damn sure they were all awake. I could see them later as I left peeking out the door. Of course, he raised hell with them. Boy, there were some meek guys and their wives.

But you know, they were on a free ride, and here we're trying to win the gold medal.

Lage: I can't believe the lack of support compared with today.

Newell: Well, that's exactly right. You should have seen what happened in the mess hall. You see, all these same people would invite their friends in. This actually happened: My team was playing, I guess, a four o'clock game, so we went into the mess hall early, about eleven-thirty, for lunch. Even then, we were behind a lot of strangers that weren't part of the team. They'd get a visitor's pass. It was all like everything was for them. They'd get the visitor's pass, invite their friends, and meantime, the athletes would have to stand behind them.

Well, anyway, we had Rafer Johnson in the decathlon. The decathlon, as you know, is a very, very demanding event. He had to compete all morning--this was the second day--he had to compete all morning, and he's in one of the greatest competitions with Yang of Taiwan, who was just a tremendous decathlon man. Rafer is standing way back, maybe forty people away from actually getting the food. We were right up there near the front, about ready to go up. I see all these people and their guests and all that. I was really upset.

I walked right through, and I said, "Come here, Rafer." And I brought Rafer up to us. I told the writer later, I said, "This really bugs me. You have

athletes--if you want to have these people, have a special place for them to eat and stand in their own line. But the athletes that are competing should have a priority. They should be able to go right up there and get their food. They should be off their feet; they shouldn't be on their feet." And here we've got our great decathlon man standing there maybe forty-five minutes to get his food, where you have a bunch of non-Olympic people ahead of him that have no right to even be there in the first place.

Lage: I wonder if they made changes after that.

Newell: I don't know. I really don't know on that, because I never have been in an Olympic village since.

Lage: Now, how did the final game go? Who did you play, Brazil?

Newell: Yes, we played Brazil, but Brazil had to beat us by eighty-one points.

Lage: Oh, because the point spread counted?

Newell: Yes, we beat them so badly the first game; we had beaten them by, I don't know, maybe it was sixty-one points. Something like that; it was impossible for them to win. And we won the game by about thirty-five or forty. We beat them about the same amount both times, but we wanted to win every game.

The only team close to us was Russia, and that was close because we got a very officious official, and he started calling fouls every time anybody moved. We got in foul trouble early. We were up about sixteen with about eight minutes to go in the half, and I had three fouls on all my starters. So I rotated them out, and we ended up ten at half. So at halftime, I told the team, I said, "You know, we can't depend on this officiating at all. We have to go out and win the game in the next five minutes, just put them away, and then they can't hurt us, these officials, no matter what they do they can't hurt us."

We outscored them twenty-five to one in five minutes. We full court pressed, and they didn't get the ball over the middle line, I think, the first ten times they had it. We'd score, steal the ball, score, steal the ball, score, and they were so confused they forgot to even call a time out. We were so much quicker than they were, we were so much better, too. We finally won the game by about twenty-eight, but I played everybody, even these two fellows that didn't play much, they played more in that game probably than any other game.

Political Systems and the Teams' Playing Styles

Lage: Burris has you making the comment that the teams seemed to play sort of as dictated by their political system, or reflecting their political system.

Newell: Oh, I really believed that.

Lage: What did that look like?

Newell: Well, just to give you an example: the South American teams were very undisciplined and played with an individuality and were almost disorganized. But they played it in a--what am I trying to say?--they loved to run, they loved to play offense.

Lage: They enjoyed the game?

Newell: Yes, they enjoyed playing, but they didn't want to be bothered by some of the real necessities, like defense. [laughter] The Russians and the Japanese were more regimented, systematized, little individuality. The Americans played a combination of individuality and discipline and organization, which reflected our country. The Italians [laughs]--or the French were the great ones. They played like they had met in the locker room. Every time there was a mistake, they'd put their hands up, "It's not mine." They were really funny, like they'd never made a mistake in their lives. A guy could throw a ball over other guys ten feet, and he'd look at the crowd like this, "Why couldn't the guy catch it?" And then the guy that didn't catch it goes like this-- [laughter]

Lage: The Gallic shrug.

Newell: But their political systems seemed to reflect the style of ball they played, was really the way I stated it. And it was true, it was true. It still is true, although the game is more international now in its scope, and the team and the political systems are not as identifiable as they were. But the Russians particularly, they played the game--I made the statement at the time--one of the differences between the American and Russian is that the Russian plays the game like it's his job, very unimaginative, and it's a nine-to-five kind of a thing. The American plays because it's fun to play, he likes to play, it's an enjoyment.

Lage: Did you get to talk to any of the Russian players?

Newell: Well, they invited me over, after we beat them. My assistant had been the Olympic coach eight years before, and he said, "Pete, you watch. The next

morning they'll be over here, they want to talk to you." Sure enough, they knock on the door, and there's the Russian interpreter, would I please go to the Russian compound. The Russians at that time were always fenced in. They didn't mingle with the rest, or very little anyway.

So I went there, and it was really funny. There were all these Russians, and the one interpreter. One of the first questions was, "What are your thoughts on the difference between the Russian basketball and the American basketball?" I said this--of course, in the nonpolitical sense--I said, "Well, the American players play with more freedom." Boy, and then the interpreter's like this. I didn't think anything for a moment. My assistant, he's laughing. And then I realized what I said, because now they start to think I'm going to make a political thing out of this.

Lage: Yes, they were thinking of it as a political comment.

Newell: Yes, and then I stopped, and I told the interpreter, "I want you to really make them understand that our definition of freedom--freedom is a basketball term, I used freedom in the sense that we play with less structure. We have structure, but we don't depend on structure totally. We want to give the player choices. We want to give him some freedom of choices, so that he can supplement the structure by his own individuality."

Lage: Well, even that can be political.

Newell: Oh, it is, sure, but that's why I say that their playing was a reflection of their political system. If they knew anything about basketball, they could see that what I said was true. There was a lot more spontaneity, there was a lot more quickness and speed and athleticism to American basketball, whereas the Russians just plop the ball down and physically play a very physical kind of a game.

So it was good, I talked with them, and they gave me a Sputnik--at that time, that was their big invention; I still have it around here somewhere--and a couple other nice little Russian gifts, kind of a jewel box and that. So it was good. I really enjoyed it, once I was there in the Olympics; it's a tremendous thrill and honor and experience.

Lage: Did you get a chance to see other sporting events?

Newell: I hardly missed any track. And I saw [Muhammad] Ali win his gold medal. I learned how to do it: we had a badge, a big badge, that pertained to basketball, and when we went to the boxing, the guy was all, "No, no, badge, badge," and we walked right on by him. We'd go on like that, past the next guy. We ended up in the third row in two empty seats there,

expecting to get kicked out at any minute, and nobody ever came up to the seats. So we saw Ali win--we saw all the boxing that night, all the gold medal. I saw all the track.

Lage: Did you see Rafer Johnson, then?

Newell: Oh, I saw Rafer win the gold medal, yes. I saw him win the gold medal, and it was the most thrilling event, most thrilling spectacle I've ever seen, because the last event was the mile. Rafer was a big man. Yang had more of a track kind of a build. Rafer was ahead of him, but Yang had to beat him by over eighteen yards, twenty yards, about that distance, to have enough points to beat Rafer. So it was really exciting, because two or three times--four laps around, you know--two or three times Yang tried to break Rafer, and you could just see Rafer's courage, reaching down there--not to get behind twenty yards.

It finally ended up where Yang got about twenty yards on him, but no more. And then they came into the stretch. Yang didn't have that much, and it ended up with about twelve yards. It was so thrilling, God, and it was in the rain, to make it even tougher. [tape interruption]

So that was the Olympics. It was a tremendous thrill. Coaches don't get gold medals, only the players. I had to leave the team after that. They went to France, but I had to get back because I was athletic director now at Cal, and the football season was about to start.

Lage: So the team went on and played in France?

Newell: Yes, they played a couple of games in France, just exhibition games against, I don't know, some all-star teams I guess.

Lage: It must be an experience they still remember.

Newell: Oh, yes. Jerry West and Oscar Robertson, particularly, still refer to the Olympics as the highlight of their athletic career.

Lage: Really? Even though the competition was not--?

Newell: No, but the whole experience--living in the village. These 1992 Olympic NBA players didn't get the flavor of the Olympics. They lived in hotel suites and never saw the village. It's a shame.

Lage: You mean the most recent Dream Team? They didn't live in the village, they were too--?

Newell: No, they had $300-a-night suites and that kind of a thing. Catered meals, and maids in their room, and things like that.

Lage: What a change.

Newell: Yes. But they didn't get what the Olympics is all about, living with all the other athletes in the country, and commingling. But it was, for our players, their greatest thrill.

VIII ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, UC BERKELEY, 1960-1968

Tensions of Coaching

Lage: Okay. Well, let's get you into the athletic directorship. I think we talked about the fact that you had planned to leave the university originally, when you quit coaching.

Newell: Well, when I resigned, I really didn't have anything.

Lage: Nothing in mind particularly?

Newell: Nothing.

Lage: Just your health.

Newell: Really, yes. I had just made up my mind that I was going to leave coaching. It wasn't Berkeley so much as I was just leaving coaching.

Lage: Was it anything Florence urged?

Newell: No. But the doctor had told me I was going to have to change my eating habits, and--just put it this way: if I didn't, that I was going to have some real severe health problems down the road.

Lage: You could feel it, I'm sure.

Newell: Yes, I could feel it, too. I started to feel it more and more.

Lage: And you mentioned the kind of sense of almost dread before you came out on the court.

Newell: Oh, yes. And that was the thing that, as I say, kept getting worse and worse, the pressure. I kept getting out to the court later and later and later. It was a self-imposed pressure. I never worried about getting fired, even if somebody was planning on firing me, it never bothered me. I never worried about that. It never entered my mind. I never worried about being the number one in the country--those things--

Lage: And you had a winning team.

Newell: Yes, I had a winning team, but it was funny--

Lage: What was it?

Newell: Well, I was almost more together and less tense when I had my weaker teams, and the challenge of playing--one of the hardest things is when you're supposed to win. That, to me, created more pressures than trying to beat a team that was supposed to beat you. So as the team got better and better, my inner tensions got greater and greater. I guess they call it burnout now, though I never considered it burnout; I just considered that my way of trying to cope was not the right way. Smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee was not the answer. But it was the only way I could do it. I just couldn't eat. I tried to eat sometimes, and the food wasn't very palatable, or I would almost upchuck it. And a lot of players are that way, too; they upchuck their food, they can't eat. Russell was that way; Bill Russell used to upchuck before every game.

Lage: In college or pro?

Newell: Both college and pro.

Lage: Gosh. There goes your theory about the good meal before the game!

Newell: Yes, sure. [telephone interruption]

Considering the Los Angeles Rams General Manager Position

Lage: Okay, so we got you out of coaching for your health. Now, how did you happen to get into the athletic directorship? Were you considering some pro?

Newell: When I had made the decision, I didn't have any idea what to do, what I wanted to do, or what I was going to do. And in reflection, I think, how

stupid, three kids--you didn't make enough money in those days to have the luxury of being idle for a year--or for a month! But I didn't think about that, and Florence again, she could see kind of a deterioration in terms of the pressures of coaching. So we just felt we'd get by. As I say, I never really worried about money or things like that, except you know you need it for the staples of life.

Pete Rozelle was the general manager of the Rams. He had just been made commissioner [of the National Football League], and I had brought Pete into college athletics at USF, when he was just twenty years old. We stayed close, and still are.

Lage: How did you bring him in?

Newell: As SID, sports information director, we called him, PR then.

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Newell: When USF went to the NIT, we were invisible to all those New York writers. Even though Pete was only twenty years old, twenty-one years old, he was kind of hob-nobbing with the elite of the sports writers. He got to know all those top sports writers.

And then he did a real good job for the Rams. He got the job with the Rams as SID [sports information director], and then he was so proficient, they made him the general manager. The owner was Dan Reeves, a very close personal friend of his. I've met Dan through Pete. Anyway, Pete called me up and told me that he'd talked with Dan on my replacing him as general manager for the Rams.

Lage: Getting into football?

Newell: Yes. Well, I was, I'd say--this was during the basketball season. I was about 80 to 90 percent sure I was going to take that job, and the money was great, and the protection of the contract was great. It was a very, very lucrative thing, especially after the kind of money I was making at Cal in coaching.

Problems at Cal with ASUC Direction of Athletics

Newell: But at that time, Adrian Kragen and his wife, Billie, were our close friends, and Glenn Seaborg, I really thought the world of him. He'd become the

chancellor, and Adrian was his liaison with sports. Glenn, his book is over there.[1] Have you heard about the book?

Lage: His new book? Yes. I haven't seen it yet.

Newell: Yes, he sent me one. It's right there. He loved my basketball team, still does. He comes to many of our functions. Our players really liked him. Of course, they have such respect for him. He was really a great--what do I want to say, almost protector of college athletics.

Lage: Seaborg had been the faculty rep for sports under Clark Kerr. He was Adrian Kragen's predecessor in that job.

Newell: Yes, and he traveled a lot of our trips with us. He got to know our players personally, and he got to see that they were students, and they were athletes also. They all graduated, and they weren't Phi Beta Kappas maybe, but they were all intelligent young men.

Lage: Did he know you were thinking about the Rams?

Newell: Yes, he did. I hadn't talked to them, because what happened at that time, a lot of things happened. Pete Elliot had resigned to go to Illinois, and Cal didn't have a football coach. They commissioned Greg [Gregory E.] Englehard and Bud [Paul T.] Hastings, who was head of the ASUC [Associated Students of the University of California], to get a football coach. They weren't on the same page, and they just kept standing--well, they would go in different directions, and neither one of them were able to bring the chancellor any name that they agreed upon.

Lage: And the ASUC still had control over the athletic program?

Newell: It was under the ASUC, yes. But the chancellor was involved in this, see. I don't know exactly what happened, but he was getting more and more upset that they weren't working together on it, and something wasn't being done. What happened, there was a former Navy coach by the name of Eddie Erdlatz. Eddie Erdlatz had coached successfully at Navy. He was very highly thought of in the college ranks, a former Saint Mary's player. He had a lot of support in the Bay Area because the media really liked him.

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[1]Glenn T. Seaborg, with Ray Colvig, Chancellor at Berkeley (Institute of Governmental Studies, U.C. Berkeley, 1994).

Well, prior to this time, maybe a year or two before, [Edwin W.] Pauley was one of the owners of the Rams, but a small owner.

Lage: Pauley, the regent?

Newell: Ed Pauley, yes. He was involved in the Rams coaching change. As an owner, he had that kind of involvement, with the Rams. One of the hot coaches, or one of the coaches whose names always pop up, was Eddie Erdlatz, who was a West Coast guy. I don't know how the contact or what exactly ensued, but Eddie Erdlatz and his wife and his family came out to interview for the job [with the Rams], and they spent about five days out here [Los Angeles], and from here they went up to the Bay Area for some time.

The word that got back out--in fact, I had somebody call me to tell me this--"You'd better tell your people to forget Eddie Erdlatz ever being the Cal coach, because Ed Pauley was really upset." Pauley was a regent, and he was very, very strong in the politics of Cal as well as UCLA. Pauley found out that Erdlatz just took a trip on the Rams, that he just came out here for a vacation, and he had no intention [of taking the Rams job], and told people that. That was the report that I got, that as far as Ed Pauley was concerned, there was no way he'd ever coach the University of California football team.

Bud Hastings was really for Erdlatz, because he was in with a bunch of local Bay Area people, sports people a lot of them, that were really supportive of Ed Erdlatz. So I called Bud and I said, "Bud," and I didn't identify my source, because it wouldn't have been fair to do it, I said, "I have a real good friend that is very knowledgeable about this whole situation, and this is what Pauley has stated to not only him but other people." Pauley was a very, very big name, as you know.

Lage: Yes, very big.

Newell: A very powerful guy. "He'll never coach. So you either better check this out, or if you can't check it out, you'd better get on another horse, because this one's dead."

Lage: It's interesting to me that a regent dabbled at this level.

Newell: Yes. Pauley was kind of a flamboyant guy anyway. But Bud didn't, he stayed on this dead horse. That is what caused the chancellor to be a little upset. And then Greg, I guess, he just didn't--I don't know what happened to Greg, because he was in a tough position.

Lage: Greg was the athletic director.

Newell: Yes. But basically, he was working for Hastings, because Hastings was the ASUC guy. So he wasn't really in a position to force Hastings.

Lage: They didn't see eye to eye.

Newell: Yes, they didn't see eye to eye. So anyway, I guess they hired a coach. That was it.

Lage: The school hired Marv [Marvin D.] Levy eventually.

Newell: Yes. They sent Arleigh Williams and a few other people, made up a committee, and they came up with this. In the meantime, I guess they told Bud and Greg that they were going to make changes for next year. I don't know exactly the timing of that one. Because I wasn't involved, I was coaching basketball, and I tried to help them. I had two of the hottest coaches in the country who had been with me at Michigan State. One of them, Bob Devany became a legend at Nebraska and the athletic director, just retired; he coached all those great Nebraska teams. He was at Wyoming then. I called him up to consider the Cal job. I told Bud and Greg, "I can get you Bob Devany, and he's a hell of a coach. I can tell you that right now. He was a great high school coach, and at Michigan State he was fantastic, and at Wyoming he's won. I can get him down here for a visit." I told Bud this.

Lage: So you were coaching basketball, but you're trying to find a football coach, or to suggest one.

Newell: Yes. So I got an appointment for Devany, and he flew--God, it was terrible. And I'm trying to coach the basketball team, and trying to help these guys. He flew to Berkeley; they put him up at the Claremont Hotel, and left him there. He called me and told me he was up there, so I went up to see him. He said, "Well, they're going to try to see me tonight or tomorrow morning." So we talked, and I was going to invite him home for dinner, but he thought that they were going to take him to dinner. But nobody shows up.

So the next day, I said, "What happened?" "Well, they called up late last night," he said. "Something happened, they couldn't make it, they'd see me this morning for breakfast. But they haven't shown up yet." Now, on the way to work I went by the Claremont. I'm really starting to get a little burned at this point, because they had come up with nothing, and here is one of the best young coaches, and he proved it later, being Coach of the Year two or three times, brought Nebraska to this level it's at right now, turned out to be one of the great--well, anyway.

They never did follow up. They turned it over to a subordinate. He never did have a decent interview. He said he did talk with one of them, I'm not sure, about twenty, twenty-five minutes, and he felt like he was taking up his time. Then they were supposed to take him to the airport, and they sent some assistant that was supposed to take him to dinner and then to the airport. Then Bob called me and he said, "The guy just called and said that he can't have dinner, but he'll take me to the airport." I said, "Come on over. I'll pick you up, and I'll take you to the airport."

I told Florence, and she put another plate out, and Bob came over to our place for dinner. He had a plane coming about ten o'clock at night. So we had a real nice visit, and I told him, I said, "Lookit, Bob, I apologize. I would never have got you into the damn business." To make it even worse, he sent in his personal expenses; he had bought his own ticket. They paid for the hotel, or at least he said, "I didn't pay for the hotel." Maybe there is still a hotel bill. But he said they just--it was very unprofessional.

Lage: They didn't pay his plane ticket?

Newell: He had to call me and said, "Hey, Pete, will you get those--" this is about a month and a half later, about a month later. This interview probably was in early December. I got a call in January.

Lage: Do you think this was a function of the way the program was run, that there wasn't an athletic department?

Newell: Well, it was--yes, it was divided. There were a lot of grey areas. So anyway, then they had the national meeting in New York, and Danny Devine was another coach friend of mine. Danny was the coach of Missouri, later coached Notre Dame. At that time, Missouri was a very, very good team, one of the top teams too, played in all the bowls and all that, and Danny was the coach.

I told Danny, I said, "Would you even consider talking with them?" "Yeah, sure." I said, "Well, I'll have them call you tomorrow. They're in New York. One or the other, or both." So I told them both. I said, "Now, don't do like you did with Devany. Give him a call, sit down, and maybe you can find out what it's going to take to get a Cal coach." Because Danny was happy at Missouri, but he was willing to listen. They never did call him.

So then I washed my hands of it. But then they screwed it up on the Erdlatz thing.

Lage: I think Seaborg says that he took a hand in hiring Marv Levy, seems to me.

Newell: Well, he did. He put the committee together. Then they brought him in, interviewed him, and he hired him, yes. Yes, he didn't go through these two guys. One of the things that really turned off the chancellor--he was really upset. He tried to get hold of Bud one time, and they couldn't find out where he was. It was during this time when things had to be done, and I knew where he was. So Adrian asked me if I knew, and I said, "Well, I'm not sure, but let me call around."

I knew where he--I had a pretty good idea where he was. He used to hang around the Bow 'n' Bell [restaurant] with Boots Erb, the owner and former Cal quarterback. Every day he was there, and the martini lunches got later and later and later. So I called and I got hold of somebody there, and I said, "Bud, you better get back here, the chancellor's really upset. They're trying to find you. He's really upset." He'd had just enough to drink where he was a little obstinate. He wasn't mad at me or anything, but he said, "Aaah, I'm sick and tired of that place," and went on like that.

So anyway, I don't know what happened. I guess the chancellor had this meeting Bud was supposed to be at, and he just forgot all about it, didn't show up. So that was kind of the end of that ASUC system that Chancellor Seaborg decided to change.

Accepting the Directorship of the New Department of Athletics

Newell: I'd told Adrian, when Adrian had asked me if I would be interested in the athletic directorship, and I said, "No way, not the way it's set up now under the Associated Students." I had never worked under this kind of situation. So he said that the chancellor had his plan formulated, and Seaborg's book talks about that. "It would be a department under the university." I said, "Well, I'd have some interest if that is the case." He said, "I think that's what's going to happen."

And then this Ram thing got bigger and bigger. I think that Pauley tried to intervene there, because Cal had contacted him.

Lage: He must have known you were being considered.

Newell: Well, he found out I was, and the Cal people wanted me to stay here, stay at Cal. But funny thing, I think the Cal job paid $18,000, and the other one paid $50,000.

Lage: Oh, lord!

Newell: And I had a choice. Ed Pauley wasn't that big an owner. Pete Rozelle was the biggest voice in this whole thing, and rightfully so, because Pete proved when he became commissioner that he was an exceptional talent and his judgment was almost perfect. And he was totally in my corner. In fact, he suggested it to me, brought it up, and supported the thing all the way. Pauley or anyone would never have been able to do anything about it. Dan Reeves was the majority owner and Pauley was not a big owner.

In fact, I met with one of the other owners, Seeley, when I was playing down at USC and UCLA. We stayed at the Knickerbocker Hotel and he came by, so I spent about forty-five minutes with him just talking about it, not agreeing to anything. He was very supportive of my going. There was another small owner that was the same way.

Lage: How did you make up your mind, then?

Newell: Well, Florence--we talked about it. Cal was a real big part of my life, and again, it was not money. I had no worry about managing the Rams; it was a lot easier than trying to take over a department. And taking over a department is really tough, because I took over the athletic department when I became athletic director, and they gave all the assets to the students. I think I had something like $37,000, and all the rest was given to the students. But they told me not to worry, and I believed them, and they were right. They did a lot of things to make it right.

I just hadn't been athletic director very long, and I get this letter from the fire chief telling me that those temporary bleachers--remember the temporary bleachers we had up behind the rooting section [in Memorial Stadium]?

Lage: Yes.

Newell: They had to be taken down because they were a fire hazard, number one, and number two, they were a health hazard, because they didn't meet some kind of standard. [laughs] To take them down and get rid of them was all the money I had left, all the money they'd left me.

Lage: The $37,000!

Newell: Yes, the $37,000, to do that. I said, "God, there must be a way." So I don't know, somehow or other I got somebody that wanted some wood, and I got him to take them down, and it was a deal where it didn't cost us anything, and he took the wood from us. So I kept my $37,000.

But I think when I left, which doesn't sound like anything these days, but I left them with $500,000 on the good side, and also they had started the press box. We had gotten that thing begun.

Lage: Did the chancellor or anybody else kind of lay out some goals, or did you work out your own goals?

Newell: More or less my own. They were so amenable to anything I said, which made it really good. I wanted to go directly to the chancellor. It was fine to go through Adrian--that was, to me, just the same as going straight to the chancellor. Because I knew that it would get to him; it wouldn't be caught in committees. And that's the way it worked out. I was able to get things done, and I never bothered him. I never once went over there demanding anything, never needed to.

For instance, we wanted to get out of Stephens, because we were leaving the ASUC.

Lage: The ASUC was in Stephens Union.

Newell: The chancellor worked it out so that we could move. They had a mess hall that was left over from the service, right in the middle of the campus there, right behind the Faculty Club.

Lage: I wonder if it's still there, or if it's been torn down.

Newell: No, I think it's been torn down. So they remodeled that to make athletic offices for us. It was nice. It wasn't fancy or anything, but it was spacious and gave us a lot more room, and we were all together, which wasn't exactly the case before.

Lage: All the coaches had their offices there?

Newell: Yes, the coaches, and the P.R. office. The P.R. used to be over in another building. They were building Eshleman Hall, and Jim Lemmon was my assistant athletic director, a very, very capable guy. Jim is the one that worked with the architects and all on this mess hall thing. Then he also later, when we went to Eshleman, was the one that worked weeks and weeks with the architects to get a plan for our office there.

Lage: This is the new Eshleman Hall?

Newell: New Eshleman, yes. And then we moved to new Eshleman about '63.

Coach Marv Levy and Cal Football

Lage: When Marv Levy was hired, Pete Elliot had quit, I thought because he didn't think Cal was supporting a high-enough-powered football effort. Is that right?

Newell: No, I think he had a chance to go back to the Big Ten to Illinois, and it was a very lucrative job, much more lucrative than Cal in terms of these ancillary things that they could provide--a radio show and things like that that they could come up with. No, I think it was a decision based on a much higher-paying job.

Lage: Did you have any desire to try to compete with that kind of program that the Big Ten offered?

Newell: No. You really try to compete with your own area, your own league. You don't ever try to compete with another league--they compete against each other, we compete against each other. That's about the way it is. But I couldn't believe when I was back at the Big Ten, you'd go out and give a talk somewhere, and they'd give you $50 or $100, which was a lot of money in those days. You could talk for two years out here, and sometimes we didn't even get a handshake.

Lage: [laughing] You might get a free lunch.

Newell: Yes, but that's about it.

Lage: So it was a different atmosphere.

Newell: Yes. It was just different. They treated coaches differently. And you found out when they paid you, they'd give you a lot more attention, and if they didn't pay you, you didn't get the respect. The more money you got, the more respect you got.

Lage: Now, did you take a role, then, in other hiring decisions at Cal? How did the hiring go after the ASUC was out of the picture?

Newell: How do you mean?

Lage: Well, we talked about the terrible scene when they were trying to replace the football coach and finally hired Marv Levy.

Newell: When Marv left, that was my decision. I had to make the decision there. It was a hard one to make. Actually, the alumni were very much against Marv,

not Marv Levy the person, but the fact that he was an academic choice, number one, and number two, he was a Phi Beta Kappa. They were convinced that Clark Kerr [former Berkeley chancellor, then UC president]--I'm talking "they" in the general sense--a lot of the alumni up and down in these clubs had convinced themselves that Clark Kerr was trying to make Berkeley a Chicago of the West and do away with some of our sports, football. Well, it wasn't true, but--

Lage: They didn't realize Levy was going to go on to become a pro coach, successful?

Newell: No. But you see, the first three years, his record wasn't good. We may have won seven games in three years. And of course, the alumni growl.

Lage: Now, I have another story for you. Tell me if this meshes with your memory. Chancellor Strong did an oral history[1] before he died. He talks about sitting on the bench in a Cal-Pittsburgh football game, back East while Levy was the Cal coach, and he observed the way Marv Levy related to his players, and he didn't like it.

Newell: Is that right? I never knew that.

Lage: He'd heard players had been grumbling, and he says that he came back and got rid of Marv Levy. It reminded me of the Campanelli stuff. But you didn't have that sense?

Newell: No, I don't have any--no--

Lage: You don't have a recollection of Strong coming to you and--?

Newell: No, certainly not.

Lage: You'd remember that, I'm sure.

Newell: Sure. He would have voiced that to me--[tape interruption]

Lage: We were talking about Marv Levy, the alumni didn't like him.

Newell: The alumni got upset because we weren't winning, and he was on a three-year contract. He was signed--I just felt--

Lage: Do the alumni come directly to you?

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[1]Edward W. Strong, Philosopher, Professor, and Berkeley Chancellor, 1961-1965. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1992.

Newell: Well, you have to go to the alumni throughout the season, you go to the Southern Seas, San Francisco Grid Club, Sacramento Grid Club, and Stockton, and San Diego, and Bakersfield, and you make all the stops. Everywhere you go, after a while they were really mad. And it wasn't really at Marv so much as it was at Clark Kerr, who they felt picked an academic. As I say, being a Phi Beta Kappa, instead of being a plus, turned out to be a minus for Marv. So that was a real kind of a downer. But that is not true. Nobody ever told me I had to fire Marv.

What happened was, after three years, there was this clamor to get rid of him, and I just didn't think it was fair. I felt that he came in there late the first year, and I felt he should have another year. Ed Strong now was the chancellor, and I said, "Ed, it's just right that he gets the opportunity to have this extra recruiting year." Because as it was, he really only got two years. And of course, Strong was in a hot seat too, because they get all over the chancellor when teams don't win, and they're mad at the coaches.

But they didn't get on me much--I didn't have any direct--but I'm sure they were grumbling because I wouldn't make the change. And I didn't make the change--

Lage: So you kept him for the next year.

Newell: Yes. I got him a real good offensive line coach, a tremendously good coach. He coached for the Chicago Bears with Ditka when they won all those championships, Stanfeld, Dick Stanfeld. He was a former All-Pro guard for the Detroit Lions for a number of years, one of the best guards in football. He was very popular with the players, and part of our coaching problem was really in defense. We had no trouble moving the ball, we couldn't stop anybody. Got him a defensive coach. But the two coaches, where they did a good job, they just weren't able to come up with the wins, and we got beat by Stanford again. And the understanding was that this year that it would be turning around and come even close to 500 percent. And started off pretty good, and then it kind of faded at the end, and the players--the coach is always the one to blame, even though the players lose the game.

And then I had to make the change, and I brought in Ray Willsey. Ray did a tremendous job at Cal. When I left, I felt--one of the reasons that I did take the job, when I was talking with Glenn and later Ed Strong, was that I wanted to try to help get football back on its feet, because although we did go to the Rose Bowl [in 1959], that was the year when SC and UCLA couldn't go because of probation.

Lage: Oh, was that how we went to the Rose Bowl? I had forgotten that.

Newell: They had so many players ineligible, they were really--

Lage: Because of the violations?

Newell: The violations, yes. They made them ineligible, UCLA especially. Somehow we ended up, and we went and did a good job. Joe Kapp did a good job in getting us there and all, but the program itself had fallen from the glory days of Pappy Waldorf.

Berkeley's Image in the Sixties, and Recruiting

Newell: Ray came in there at a very, very difficult time, the 1964 season, and that was right at the height of [Mario] Savio [and the Free Speech Movement]. It made it so difficult to recruit in all sports, because the perception was that, it's a drug-oriented, communist campus.

Lage: Dissent-oriented, at least.

Newell: Yes.

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Newell: The other schools just use that. They will say, "You don't want to send your son there because he'll become a communist, he'll become a drug addict."

Lage: Is this something the coaches talked about among themselves?

Newell: Oh, sure, because they'd find they'd get in and the parents wouldn't even talk to the coaches. The kids would like to go, but the parents, "No, I'm not going to send him up there and have him lose his religion and everything else. Or get in with that hippie culture you got up there." You were on this side or that side in those days. And you see, you've got to understand that the one bastion of support for the university in those periods are the athletic support groups, which give support because they think so much of the university. They represent to these dissident groups the only organized resistance.

Of course, in those days, I used to get very, very upset at our faculty, because they just turned over faculty meetings to this minority dissent group, and they would invoke these various edicts that pertained to what was happening on that campus. Most of them were very pro-dissident, very

anti-straight student athletic type of thing. It was almost disadvantageous to be a fraternity or sorority member, and if you wore clean clothes, you were almost ostracized. That's the way it was.

Well, just to give you an example, [laughs] this was a night of all nights. We're playing UCLA, and they had Kareem [Abdul-Jabbar] there, and they were on this big, big winning streak, had been winning all those NCAAs.

Lage: This was at home?

Newell: Yes, we're playing at home, in Harmon. Those days, you had an election for everything. Yell leaders, this, that. We had these three--God, I mean, if you went down to Main Street and looked at the worst three street people, they would look well-dressed compared to these guys. They were in coveralls, their hair was tangled, they wore beards, and God, they were not athletic looking.

Lage: As our yell leaders?

Newell: Well, they ran for yell leader, and they won because again, it was an organized dissent. They won. Their one yell was going to be, "Get out of Vietnam." That was the only yell at the basketball game: "Get out of Vietnam!" Imagine. [laughter]

And you see, the athletic department was really the target, because as I say, you are the one resistance group to them. You're the one organized group that the alumni can rally around and all. And of course, you've got your coaches, especially your football coaches, your assistant coaches, they want to go and clean house every day. They're tearing the American flag, burning the American flag, and a lot of us were in the service, and we'd see them taking uniforms and desecrating them and just doing a lot of things that were done at the time that if you did them now or you did them twenty years before, they'd string you up. But then, it was more in vogue.

Lage: The temper of the times.

Newell: Temper of the times. And of course, you're right in the middle--. And then we have the Black Union, Black Athletic Union, whatever they called that. You've got the bleeding-heart liberals in the faculty and in the administration, every time they got a push from any kind of a dissident group, they caved.

Lage: Let me just ask you, because I want to talk about that black revolt or whatever it was, but is there a finish to the story of that UCLA game and Kareem?

Newell: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I got off track. Yes, there was a big finish. I guess a half-hour before the game, I had no idea what was going to happen. Because the guys that come to the game are the fraternity guys, the guys that are straights are the ones coming to the game. And they are sick and tired, but they're not organized in the sense like the other ones are. And so many of these dissidents weren't even students, and that was proved when Ed Strong had all those guys arrested, guys and gals, and they just trashed Sproul Hall. Those that were students, about 90 percent of them were out-of-state students. Many of them were out-of-state, maybe not that many. So many of them, it was almost like they were transplanted from wherever they were to come to Berkeley, because at Berkeley you're going to get world coverage, and you would. I was in France there once, and hell, Berkeley comes on the news before de Gaulle.

Athletics and Racial Conflict, 1968

Newell: Anyway, everything was so negative, everything so negative, that it was hard to keep the morale up. And then you had the black group, and we had a couple of black players that were malingerers. They were the last guys to get out of the training room all the time, and--

Lage: Is this football?

Newell: Yes, in football. Jack Williamson--who was by any standard probably the best trainer in the country, and efficient and fair and good at what he was doing--he would say, "Now, come on, get out here." They'd be sitting in those hot tubs, and supposedly--and neither one of them played. I don't know--must have been from being out the night before, but anyway, they'd get out on the field, and sometimes they'd come late, and the coach would be upset and say, "Get them out here on time!" to Jack. So Jack's got this pressure.

Well, when all this blew up, they said that the trainer's yelling at them all the time. Jack was one of the targets for this group.

Lage: Did the players come to you with things like that?

Newell: No, no, they never--they went to their own group. The guys that were the ringleaders were the guys that were the malingerers that were on the football team. The guys that were playing, Joe Griffen and a lot of those athletes, they were kind of the peacemakers. But some of these other guys, the only recognition they ever had was standing up there and dissenting.

I remember, I met with all of them, and somebody told me, "Bob Steiner says you're crazy." I said, "No, I'll be there." And I sat in there, and I was the only white guy in the room.

I explained to them, I said, "The one thing, you've got to understand us, you expect us to understand you. Let's use the word 'boy.' Now, when the word 'boy' is used by any white person, the connotation that you get is some Southern sheriff with a cigar and a big badge, and 'Boy, do this, Boy, do that, Boy--'. But that isn't the proper connotation of 'boy.' A boy is a very endearing term in the white society, 'My boy.' And you know this, if you just think about it. When we use the word as parent, we use the word 'boy,' you couldn't say a nicer thing about your son."

So I said, "When a coach uses the word 'boy,' he's not putting you down. He's using a word in our vernacular that is a good word, a positive word, a comfortable word. But some of you are really reaching out there, for this Southern sheriff with the cigar. And you know damn good and well that it's a whole different context of what that Southern sheriff and that coach is saying when they use the word." And I talked about that.

Lage: Were they receptive?

Newell: Well, yes, some of them--they had a couple. It was really funny. They had one guy on the team, but he was one of those--worse than a malingerer, he was a never-was. He started to talk like he's going to put me down, white man stuff. One of the football players, I forget which one it was, walked over to him and told him, "Either talk right or get the hell out. We're here trying to resolve something, we don't want any personal things. If you've got a personal problem, then you get out, because we won't--." And the guy shut up after that.

I didn't have any fear or anything like that, because there were enough guys in there that knew me. But I wanted to give them an opportunity [to talk], and they did. A lot of the things that were bothering them were things that I was glad to hear, and some of them I tried to do something about. Their problems weren't real great, but the guys that really made them great were these guys that were picking on people like Jack, and instances where--and I told them at the time, because I'd heard, the coaches would come back about these guys, always coming out late. And I addressed myself to that. I told them, "You know, as a coach, you only have so much time to work. You can't work 90 percent if you're going to play athletics, you all know this, you've got to observe the time when the bus leaves, the time when you start practice, the time when you play a game. If you have to wait ten minutes for one guy and then twenty minutes the next day for another, you don't have any organization, you don't have a team. So what

you have to understand, the coaches get on that trainer when he doesn't have those guys out there. He isn't getting on you--hell, as far as he's concerned, you can stay in there all day. But his job is to make damn sure he officially gets everybody out there in time to start practice." So that handled that problem.

Lage: What about the Bob Presley problem--?

Newell: Well, Bob Presley was a guy who never should have gone to Cal. Jim Padgett, who succeeded Rene as coach--and he only lasted a couple of years--Jim was Rene's assistant, and he's the guy that recruited Presley. Rene didn't know that he had not really graduated from high school, but he had gone to J.C. [junior college] and he got some kind of a degree from the J.C. How he ever got into Cal I really don't know.

Lage: Intellectually he shouldn't have gotten in?

Newell: Intellectually, he had no right to be there. He never was intellectually capable. He wasn't a bad kid, but he was an easily swayed person. Because he was a big guy and he was a center on the team, and he was a very talented kid--he was used, used badly, by some of these guys that were in the head of the Black Union thing. I got a kick out of the fact that they used him to put down Rene. Rene was a minority, for God's sake. Like he was Pasadena rich or something. Rene was a minority, hell, he knew what being a minority was.

Lage: What was his background?

Newell: His folks were Mexican, and delightful people. But at that time, Mexican was a minority too, so he knew about being a minority.

Lage: What was the incident with Presley? I've read about it, and I've heard three different things: the coach objected to his hairstyle; he didn't follow team rules; and he was late to practice.

Newell: Yes. What was the second thing?

Lage: Let me see if I have it written down here. "Team rules, would be late to practice."

Newell: He did have the Afro.

Lage: Oh, "missing the team practice, violating basketball ethics." I think that came out in a news report. And then the hair. Did Rene object to his hair?

Newell: That I don't recall. That was an issue, but as I remember, I think that was a conjured issue. He did have one of those great big African hairdos. But at that time, it was fairly common.

Lage: But did he not get to practice on time and things like that?

Newell: He was late to practice, and Rene had told him that he wasn't going to tolerate it. And then he didn't show up for practice, and Rene found out later that he was over in the food service place--

Lage: Bear's Lair?

Newell: Yes, and he never went to practice, he was over there with another player. So Rene suspended both of them for a game, and this caused a big uproar. Then this was when he was accused of being prejudiced and all that [January 1968].

Lage: And then the white players got mad when Rene took him back.

Newell: That's true. What happened was, somehow or other, the other player was allowed to come back, as I remember. Did you have any note of that?

Lage: I had thought that they both came back, perhaps because the administration--

Newell: Well, I'll tell you what I think happened, but you're going to have to check further.

Lage: I have some Daily Cal things, and then I have an article written later.[1]

Newell: Well, I think this is what happened, but double-check this out. I'm going on memory. Rene let the other, who was a senior player, and he was from Long Beach, as I recall--

Lage: Was he also a black?

Newell: Yes, but he never had been that kind of a problem, and he and Rene had always gotten along.

Lage: So he let him come back?

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[1]"The Future of College Athletics is at Stake: Black Athletes and Racial Turmoil on Three Predominantly White University Campuses, 1968-1972," Journal of Sport History, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1988).

Newell: Well, he had suspended both of them. Then, he let this other player come back. It was a kind of an issue that was explosive, because then it looked like he was prejudiced against this Presley. They had both done the same thing. As I recall, now, I called Rene and I said, "Rene, either they both are out or neither one of them are out. Rene, you can't, under the climate of what we're in right now, you can't allow one guy to come back when they're both guilty of the same thing."

Well, as I recall, Rene's point was, "He's always testing me, he's always doing this, and late for practice." I said, "Did you ever tell him that if he was going to be late, he was going to be off the team?" Because the other kid had never been late before. As I recall now, he said, "No, but I told him about being late, and I was upset because he was late," which he should have been. Maybe this was the problem because there was a real inconsistency--Rene had made a mistake on it, because he had not told them.

This whole incident was very difficult because Rene had played for me at USF and had been my assistant. In fact, when I left Cal I negotiated with --I didn't want Rene to stay there, because I just felt that they'd chew him up, because the administrators were trying to force me to fire him all the time, which I would never have done.

But anyway, because Rene had never made it clear that they would be off the team if they were late for practice, and he had let the other player come back, I said, "Rene, just listen to me, the logic of what I'm saying." And Rene then agreed that he--he had had it with Presley, I can understand that. He had had it with him, and Rene's a tough little guy anyway. He tried to have the patience as long as he could, and then this guy just kept trying him and trying him and trying him. And then he just kind of exploded on him.

So then he agreed, he let him back, and then the white players [went on strike]. Then I think I talked to Rusty Critchfield on that. Rusty was captain. Rusty was really, probably of all the players there, the one that was most deeply affected by everything. We became worried about Rusty, because he disappeared for a day. Just got in his car and I don't know where he went. But finally I got hold of him, and he told me about what happened. He said, "The problems are so great, and it's so unfair to Rene what they're doing to him," because all these--there were signs, "Get rid of Hererrias," and all these kind of things. It just was a concerted effort to try to make him a sacrificial lamb in the thing.

Lage: And then you had the black players from all the sports kind of united around that issue, and they were going to do a boycott.

Newell: Yes. Well, that's true. If they wanted to boycott, they could have boycotted. We were prepared to go with our white athletes next year in football, and I told them that. And we would have. We wouldn't have done very well. But the alumni would have been at that point kind of happy, because they were upset--I'm getting it from the other side.

Lage: Yes, you were really in the middle.

Newell: Oh, I'm right in the tempest.

Frustrations with University Administration

Lage: And then what about the administration? You had Roger Heyns as chancellor then.

Newell: Yes, but oh jeez, the administration.

Lage: Did they come down on you? I know they--

Newell: They didn't come down on me, no. They didn't come down on me, except what they did is give in every time. [Earl] Budd Cheit and all of them gave in on every issue. One of them, just to give you an example of what--

Lage: And Arleigh Williams was involved.

Newell: Arleigh was uncommon. He just kind of stayed out. He was out of harm's way. [laughs] He didn't ever involve himself. He did and he didn't. He just made sure that what side he was on was the right one. This is a little while later, but it kind of tells you about what the administration position was. First of all, the administration was upset with me, because I wouldn't get rid of Rene. But they didn't want to take me on, because they knew the alumni had it up to their eyeballs in terms of giving in, giving in, giving in.

About this time, I got a call from somebody telling me that John Erby was at Letterman Hospital. John had been a black football player, a tackle, and only weighed about 175 pounds, 180 pounds, and probably was the most popular football player we ever had there during my time. A wonderful person, just a wonderful young man. He had a lot of tragedy in his life. His mother and his sister were killed in a head-on crash--he was from the middle of California, Fresno, Bakersfield, in there somewhere--coming up to a football game. And John, when he graduated--as I tell you, he just was a

bubbly guy, he's the kind of a guy you love to have come into a room because he'd brighten everything up.

He loses his foot in Vietnam, and he's at Letterman Hospital. This is what I hear. So I get hold of him, and I call him over there, and I get him on the phone, "How are you?" "Oh, fine, fine," and he tells me about his artificial foot and all that. I'm ready to commiserate with him, but he's just as bubbly as ever, like nothing ever happened.

I said, "Well, how about coming on over and visiting with me? Would you ever think about coaching?" He said, "Well, no. I haven't, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't. I'd like to think about it a little." So he did, and he called back and made a date to come over.

So I talked to Ray Willsey. I said, "Ray--" and he had heard about John. I said, "This guy is outstanding. I want you just to sit down with him, and if you agree with what I am telling you and what I think, I'd like to see him be one of our freshman coaches, line coach, because I don't know what his mobility will be with that foot. I have no idea. But knowing John, he'll get around. But I want you to understand one thing: I don't want him hired because he's black. I don't want any connotation of racial quota kind of a thing. So I just want you to meet him, and if you agree, I'd like to see what we can do in terms of a job," because he could stay at Letterman and come over and do it, because he was going to be there for a while.

So John came over, and first when he comes in, I'll never forget this: the secretary receptionist--Priscilla was her name--she knew John. John comes in, and he pirouettes when he comes in, and I just couldn't believe it. It was almost like he was proud of his new foot. But that's the way he was; he just was a special person. So I had a real nice talk with him. He'd been one of those guys in Vietnam, you know, where there were a lot of guys who never got there that were bitching about it and how hard it was, and they never even get where it is. Then I introduced him to Ray, and he went over to Ray's office. Ray had a great talk with him and really, really liked him.

Bob Steiner was my P.R. guy. So I called Bob, and of course he knew John, and I said, "John's going to join our football staff next year, and I want you to sit down with John and put out a release." I told Bob, I said, "Bob, I don't want any racial overtone on this. I don't want to say 'black,' I don't want, 'John Erby, our captain of our such-and-such, and his foot, etc.,'" because I don't want to make it look like it's one of those quota things again. He said, "Fine, that's good."

I had to go down to a meeting in L.A. here, and before I left, he read me what he had written and it was great.

I get down to L.A., and the next morning I read the paper: "Cal Hires Black Coach to Ease Racial Tensions." Boy, I was so upset--

Lage: Was that an official release?

Newell: That was on the official release. It was probably Roger [Heyns] and his people. See, he put on his staff a lot of those way-left guys, one of the biggest ones on campus. What probably happened was the release had to clear the guy that was for the university, and the chancellor and his group felt that this would ease their problem because the racial tensions between the city of Berkeley and the university weren't that good.

That really was one of the things that really caused me, more than anything, to think about leaving, and I told him at the time; I think it's probably the first time an athletic director ever really told a vice chancellor what he thought of him.

Lage: What vice chancellor?

Newell: Cheit. And I told him, I said, "Budd, you can't expect the athletic department to solve your problems, nor do I expect you to solve mine." He said, "I didn't understand," that kind of answer. But I was really upset. I told Heyns, too. I said, "This is what's wrong with the university right now. There's nobody with enough guts to stand up and meet these issues. You just keep backing up, backing up, backing up, and meantime we're going out to the alumni groups and all, and we're just catching hell everywhere about that weak-kneed university, and you're letting all these groups run all over you." There was a very, very antagonistic feeling with the alumni throughout the state. I'm not saying all--but the ones that we dealt with, and they're the ones that give support, and a lot of those are the ones that build buildings on that campus.

So it was a real trying time. And as I say, when you're dealing with administrators, you're not dealing with strong people. You're dealing with people that, if they've got a problem, let's call a committee kind of thinking. You're dealing with athletic people, you're dealing usually with people that have to make decisions. And whether it pleases you or not, they're going to make the decision, and not put their head in the sand and hope it goes away.

Anyway, then the Rene thing came up, and they didn't really go head-to-head with me, and I'm not saying I'd have won if I'd have gone head-to-

head with them, but I would have gone head-to-head with them. Because I'd have really got tough on that, and I'd have made it a real issue. At the same time, I wanted Rene to get out of there, because I could see if I left, these vultures were over him and they'd take him like a Christmas turkey. They couldn't wait 'til I got out of there so that they would have their way. It was just a few of these vice chancellors.

So I talked to Rene, and frankly, what I did is I said, "Rene," and I told him just what I'm telling you. I said, "I'm leaving, and I just don't trust these people that you're going to be dealing with. You know from what has happened how they have been nonsupportive, how they have managed to turn things from fact to fiction in a lot of ways, and that they won't stand up and support you. I think I can get you, if you resign, I can get you a year of your full salary and all the rest. Whatever. I'm not telling you to resign; if you want to stay, you stay, because I'll never fire you. They'll have to get somebody in here to fire you, because I'll never fire you, because I know what a good coach you are and what a good person you are." And he was.

But I said at the other end--I love the guy, and I said, "I don't want you to be here without any support, and that's exactly what I think it will be. Although you have support from the football coach, and Ray Willsey and all." Ray Willsey was then my assistant A.D.

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Newell: By then I had made my mind up that I was going to go into the NBA at that time.

Lage: So did Rene take up your suggestion?

Newell: Yes. I said, "You talk it over with Mae," and I'll tell you, it was the best advice I could ever give him, because he was able to finish his teaching credential at USF, and then went right into teaching the next year. Of course, it's always kind of a personal problem when you have something like that happen--personal problem in the sense that it's something you haven't accomplished that you feel you want to accomplish before you leave. But as I say, there was no way he could ever do it there.

Lage: He didn't want to go on to try to get a coaching job at another--?

Newell: No, he didn't. No, I don't think so. You'd have to talk to Rene; I don't think so. But what he was interested in was getting his teaching credential, and he went right into teaching, and did some high school coaching, and then became just a teacher. Retired here a few years ago. And he stayed very close to a lot of the Cal people, socially, the Ricksens and all, they all

became kind of a social group. It worked out good that way. The basketball people he never had trouble with; it was just the administration and these dissident groups that were using him and using Presley.

Lage: What a time.

Newell: Yes. It was a time where you had to be together and be strong to fight these elements that were personally involved.

Lage: Did Adrian Kragen continue as faculty representative in these later years?

Newell: Adrian had left maybe when Strong left, right in there. See, now when Heyns came in, and Cheit and those people all came in after. And that whole group was a whole different kind of group than the ones that were around Ed Strong. But see, Kerr got Ed Strong fired because he stood up to those original guys [FSM leaders], and he took them all to jail. They had all those things out there, 575 of them, as I think--I'll never forget that day.

Lage: You don't seem that fond of Kerr.

Newell: Well, I never had any problems when he was chancellor, and he was the chancellor when I came there. But when I was the athletic director, I had to go around and meet these alumni and defend Kerr. I did, I defended him, because I would get in, and people would say he wanted to turn Cal into another University of Chicago, and that he was an egghead and this and that. My experience when I was coaching was that he was not athletic, but he wasn't anti-athletic.

Lage: He wasn't pro, like Seaborg.

Newell: No. And I went to a lot of functions at his place, and was invited. I found him pleasant and all that.

But then more and more, as time went on, it just seemed that he talked one way and did another. I never, ever, before an alumni group, was ever critical of him. But I got to the point, and it was just contrary to me and what I've always stood for, that I couldn't support him. But I couldn't defile him either, and I wouldn't. When I got to that point, that's when I felt I needed to get out as athletic director. If you can't--it's like a player. If you've got a player that can't get along with the coach, he either gets along with the coach or he leaves. He doesn't stay and undermine the coach. I believe that. I coached that way, and I taught that way, and when they go out into business, if you can't be supportive of the people you're working for, then move. Don't stay and undermine, and I would never do it, and I

never did it. But the last year, year and a half, during all this turmoil, I never felt that we got any kind of support at all.

Lage: At that time I think the individual campuses were becoming more of the center of power for these things than the president's office. [Kerr left the presidency in 1967.]

Newell: Well, that could have been, too. But there were some things--I can't recall what they were right now, but that I felt were not supportive. I didn't feel he supported us, I didn't for the last few years. When I was convinced in my mind that he wasn't, is when I just felt that I'm never going to publicly challenge him or berate him or anything like that, but I don't have to work for him either. That's another reason I decided to quit, because when I quit there, I didn't have a job again.

Lage: Another time when you just quit.

Newell: I didn't have a job, no. I didn't have a job. I just made up my mind I had done that. When I quit coaching, I never looked back to say, "Boy, I wish I hadn't coached," or, "I wish I was still coaching." I never did it.

Lage: That's a great asset, I think.

Newell: I think it is, too. I felt that we built the football program up, I felt these other problems were campus problems that we just--

Lage: Couldn't really deal with.

Newell: Yes. It was not our doing, and I was very, very disturbed that we didn't get more support for fellows like Jack Williamson. They put together a committee, Heyns did, and I liked Roger Heyns. He was a nice man, but I felt that he just listened to the wrong people. He listened to all the left-of-center people, and those are the ones who hurt him with many alumni.

Hiring Coaches for Water Polo and Track

Lage: Let me just ask one more question, and then I think we ought to finish up. Did you have much to do with minor sports, water polo and--?

Newell: Well, I hired Pete Cutino [water polo coach].

Lage: Oh, you were the one.

Newell: Oh, I hired Pete. Why that?

Lage: Well, he was such a great coach.

Newell: Oh, he was great, yes. I hired Pete, and Bill Martel, the wrestling coach. Of course, Hal Frey was my gymnastics coach, he was a great coach.

Lage: He was there for a long time, too.

Newell: I didn't hire him, but he worked for me, and he was a funny little guy. He was really a good coach. I was trying to think of some of the other coaches that I may have hired in there.

Lage: Now, in hiring someone like Pete Cutino, I assume you're not a water polo expert.

Newell: Oh, no.

Lage: How do you choose the coach?

Newell: Well, I had people that were water polo experts tell me. He was a high school coach in the Walnut Creek area in there, as I recall. I had him come up and interviewed him and looked at his background, and I was favorably impressed.

Lage: He sure did well for, how many years? Twenty years or something.

Newell: Oh, absolutely. He did well as soon as he got there. In fact, I have to tell a funny story on that. When I introduced him after I hired him, [laughs] I don't know, I just thought it up at the time. I said, "You've heard of coaches picking up a program with poor personnel, no material, no ability. I put Pete Cutino in here, and our swimming team is so bad, we wouldn't let them into the deep end of the pool." [laughter] I just had made it up. And he still tells that story.

Lage: That's funny.

Newell: That I wouldn't let them into the deep end of the pool, and that was about right, because I think we were the only team that almost had a guy drown. [laughter] It was a bad team, it was horrible.

Lage: You hired Sam Bell in track?

Newell: Sam Bell, I hired Sam, because Brutus retired.

Lage: That must have been a big hire after so many years with Brutus Hamilton.

Newell: Yes. Brutus was a great man, great, just great. Yes, Sam was at Oregon State and was very, very successful at Oregon State, and he's at Indiana now, has been for a number of years. He's probably retired, I guess, now. But he was considered one of the best track coaches. It's harder for a track coach at Cal or Stanford than it is down south here, because so many of your top track athletes are down here, and it's hard to get them away from SC or UCLA. At that time, SC was very, very strong. Of course, UCLA is always strong. But SC was able to split up scholarships and things like that, and always--they never had the depth, they always had the quality. But as time has gone on, SC's track team has, because they won't let you split scholarships any more, and the scholarships are so expensive there, that they have kind of fallen down in strength.

Relations with UCLA, Questions About Recruiting

Lage: How did the relationship with UCLA go over the years? It seems like there were various problems.

Newell: Yes, there were problems, because UCLA always--they're the little brother, and they were always whining about this, whining about that. And when athletics came under the university, they gave us a certain amount of the money that the students brought in. I forget how much it was. Well, they gave UCLA about twice, over three times as much as we got, because they were going to be building a basketball--no, a football stadium.

Lage: They never did.

Newell: Well, but they kept giving them the money, giving them the money, and they used the money for other things. They kept part of it, but they still got that money, and they were able to use it for a lot of other things. In fact, I don't think they have any of it left now, from what I understand. They're always crying they don't have any money left.

But I would get upset at UCLA; they tried to steal our songs when I was there, and I raised hell with Kelly James on that.

Lage: Now, was Kelly James the band director? I think we did talk about this last time.

Newell: Yes, he was. [tape interruption]

Lage: Let's finish up with some UCLA remembrances.

Newell: Yes, well, UCLA, they always felt that Cal was big brother.

Lage: And yet their athletic program was very strong.

Newell: Their athletic program was very successful, but I don't think they ever got the respect from Berkeley that they wanted, because, well, Berkeley always felt that SC was their real rival down here. That was the one that--

Lage: You want to beat the worst.

Newell: Yes. And of course, Stanford and Cal, that's the number one rivalry. Even then when UCLA would kill Cal, they still wouldn't get the respect. "Well, that was UCLA," kind of a thing, our little brother. They just had that Baby Bruin image.

Lage: Did you deal with Wilbur Johns [UCLA athletic director, 1948-1962]? As athletic directors, did you have a lot of things to work out?

Newell: Yes. We had some things between the schools where you had to pass scholarship lists and things like that. See, at Cal, our players always worked. We had to keep up the football stadium, paint it in the spring and all. After football games we cleaned it, the next Sunday--

Lage: The players themselves did that?

Newell: Sure, that was our work program. My players in the work program, all of them worked. In fact, it was used in recruiting against us by UCLA and some of the other schools, because they didn't have any facilities. My guys would, during baseball season, go chase foul balls. At two and a half dollars a ball [laughing], it was a savings to have them do it. But they had to work out in the track stadium, and paint, and hoe weeds--

Lage: I didn't realize that.

Newell: Oh, sure.

Lage: It was part of the scholarship?

Newell: All my guys, all the time I was at Cal as coach, my guys had to work, and they had to work the program. I wouldn't allow them--that's the way the rule is, that's the way you do it. And they'll tell you, they may not have liked the work they did--I don't know, they didn't work under me--but they'd show up at the appointed time and whatever it was they were supposed to

do, they evidently did okay, because nobody ever came back to me and said they didn't.

Lage: But UCLA didn't have that kind of a program?

Newell: They didn't have any facilities. So they'd say, "You go to Cal, you're going to have to clean the football stadium, you're going to have to do this, you're going to have to do that, and here we don't have work. You don't have to work for your scholarship." But in the concept--you were supposed to. You would get seventy-five dollars a month, and for that, you're supposed to work thirty-seven and a half hours. And even when I was athletic director, we adhered to that, sure. SC didn't have it, but they didn't use it as a recruiting thing like UCLA did. You wanted to go to UCLA or Cal, UCLA would use that as a pawn, "Hey, you come to us, you don't have to work. Go there, they make you work."

Lage: I see, so that caused--

Newell: Yes. I told them one time, I said, "You're the best advertisers we have for our athletic program, because you tell everybody you have to work up here."

Lage: And you want guys to work.

Newell: Yes. "You're implying that other schools, like yourself, you don't adhere to it."

Lage: Did you feel that UCLA had kind of a shady record on recruiting, back to your time?

Newell: Yes. When I first came, they were indicted by the PAC-10, they were giving players $50 or $75 or $100. The top player was $100, another one was $75, and the rest were $50.

Lage: Football, though. Or basketball?

Newell: Basketball. Three times their basketball program was in trouble, and they had Sam Gilbert there later. He wasn't around then.

Lage: It was '82 when that all came out about Sam Gilbert. But I guess it had gone on for some time.[1]

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[1]Sam Gilbert was a UCLA alumnus implicated in on-going recruiting violations in the UCLA basketball program.

Newell: Well, yes. He came with Kareem; he and Kareem arrived the same time. Kareem was never on a scholarship. See, they never even tried to abide by the spirit of the rules. An educational institution certainly should abide by the spirit of the rule, even more so than the letter. The spirit of the rule is that if you're on scholarship, whatever the rules and regulations are, you abide by them. The fact they didn't have facilities, still they should have created jobs, to make it again an even field. But if they didn't, they shouldn't have used it as a positive in recruiting.

But Kareem, I talked to J. D. [J. D. Morgan, UCLA athletic director after Wilbur Johns retired in 1962.] I said, "He doesn't show on your scholarship list." "Well, Peter, he got his own job." I said, "Come on, J. D. You're talking to Pete. What do you mean he got his--?" "Well, I'm not exactly sure what he's doing, but he was able to get--" Well, the job that he got was delivering film four times a year to New York where he lived.

Lage: [laughs] That's a pretty good job.

Newell: Sure, it's a great job. He never came under any NCAA restriction.

Lage: Did that come out later, or Kareem himself told you?

Newell: No, it came out. Sure it came out. They changed the NCAA rule. The NCAA couldn't do anything about it, because the spirit of that rule was that you wouldn't do something like this.

Lage: So UCLA sort of got him free. They didn't have to use a scholarship.

Newell: They didn't have to use a scholarship, no. But they made the NCAA rewrite that rule. But he never showed on the scholarship list.

Lage: And you called them on it at the time?

Newell: Absolutely. Well, I looked, I said, "Where is he?" [Lew] Alcindor was his name then. Then J.D. tells me he got this job on his own. He didn't know anybody in California, for God's sake, when he came out here. How could he get a job like that? But he lived at Sam Gilbert's place, and Sam was the guy that did all that stuff. Sam, I think Sam's the one that told me exactly what it was that was the problem.

Lage: So you knew Sam also?

Newell: Oh, I knew Sam when I was general manager of the Lakers. He used to come to all the games. Yes, I knew Sam.

Lage: One other thing: when I was leaving last time, you had some things to say about Charles Young at UCLA. Was he involved in athletics during that time? He wasn't yet chancellor.

Newell: He was an assistant to Chancellor Murphy. But yes, he's really--of course, he's an athletic chancellor really. He's always been a rah-rah chancellor.

Lage: Did you have some run-ins with him during this time?

Newell: I never had any run-ins with him. I just felt that he was so gung-ho that he allowed things that we couldn't do at Berkeley.

Lage: He allowed things to go on?

Newell: Yes. But I never had any run-ins with him. I knew him, and I didn't know him. I didn't particularly go out of the way, nor did he go out of the way. [laughter]

Lage: He's sure been around a long time, though.

Newell: He sure has. He's not a very popular guy, but by God, he's beaten the posse. They've been after him for a long time but they haven't gotten him.

Lage: He must be popular with somebody.

Newell: Yes.

Lage: Okay, I think we should close off. I can tell I've really pushed you to the limit.

Newell: That's okay.

Walter Haas, Jr.--The Epitome of a Real Cal Supporter

[Interview 4: May 18, 1994]##

Lage: The next person that I'm going to be interviewing is Walter Haas, Jr.[1]

Newell: Oh, Wally Haas.

Lage: And I wondered if you had any connection with him. I know he loves athletics.

Newell: Oh, sure. There hasn't been a truer Blue than Walter Jr. and his whole family. Yes, when I first came there in '54, Walter was, I guess, about the age of his son [Walter III] right now. He always was supportive, never one of those clamoring to change coaches. Whatever the coach was or the administration was, he was always supportive. He and his family have evidenced time after time after time their love and support for the university in every possible way.

Lage: The latest being the business school.

Newell: I didn't know that.

Lage: A huge donation, and now it's called the Haas School of Business.

Newell: That whole family, his father--I knew his father--and of course him, and his son, who is now I guess, involved in baseball, with the Oakland A's. But Walter and his wife [Evelyn Danzig Haas] are just two beautiful people.

Lage: When would you have had connections with him? Formal occasions?

Newell: Any California get-together that involved athletics in the Bay Area, he was always there. The Grid Club in San Francisco, every Monday he would be there, and he would always come to the games. Often after games there would be receptions and things like that that he would be included in, and Florence and I would be too, often. Florence got to know his wife fairly well and liked her a lot. They just were two wonderful people, and, as I say, there's never been a truer Blue family than the Haas family.

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[1]Walter A. Haas, Jr. Levi Strauss & Company Executive, Bay Area Philanthropist, and Owner of the Oakland Athletics. Regional Oral History Office, 1995. [Mr. Haas died in September 1995.]

And any sport--he's liable to be at a baseball game, track meet. It's always been a big part of his life. But he is not one of those people that demanded winning. Truly a Cal supporter. He's the epitome, to me, of a real Cal supporter. He may not like the fact the team isn't doing so well, but he understands that Cal doesn't have as many things going for it as UCLA, Stanford, and USC in terms of sometimes entrants, sometimes money, things of that nature, that are often the difference in recruiting.

An Aside on Charlie Finley's A's Team and Baseball

Lage: I hope Walter Haas's experience with Cal losing over the years will help him now with the A's. [laughs]

Newell: With the A's?

Lage: Right. This season and last season have been such a turnaround from his winning teams in previous years.

Newell: Yes, and he doesn't deserve something like that, because he resurrected baseball there after those years of Charlie Finley, and the franchise had to go through a real revamping. Which Charlie tried to do, but the commissioner wouldn't let him do it. He was trying to sell some of his players so that he'd have enough money to keep his farm system going, which was very good and produced so many of his young early players. The commissioner, who had almost a vendetta against Charlie Finley, stopped him every time.

And yet, there were a number of precedents. One main precedent was years ago, Connie Mack of the Philadelphia Athletics had the greatest team in baseball, better than the Yankees then. They had to sell three of their top players, and they were three of the great players in baseball, to have enough money because there wasn't enough support in Philadelphia to be able to pay the salaries. So he sold them, and there was never a problem.

So that was the outstanding precedent, but there had been other precedents where teams that had fallen on bad economic times had to sell players to the more affluent teams to keep going. But it was a personal thing between that commissioner and Charlie. And then Charlie proceeded to mock the league in terms of showing how very much of a fallacy baseball is in their operation, where the visiting team got 28 or 32 percent of the gate, I can't remember which. Charlie didn't have a P.R. guy, he had a local kid as radio announcer. Rapper Hammer, when he was thirteen years old was the radio announcer.

He just made a mockery of it, of the whole system. He'd go into New York, because New York was always drawing well, playing well, and he'd come out with maybe $100,000, we'll say. I'm not sure what the figure would be, but in a three-game series, probably a lot more than that. And Charlie had one of the few teams that made money, because he was making money on the road. When they'd come to his place, they didn't get enough money to pay for their laundry.

That was all caused by this vendetta with the commissioner.

Lage: Who was the commissioner then?

Newell: Bowie Kuhn. It seemed like every day you picked up the paper, he and Charlie were in some other kind of a squabble. And Charlie, to this day, he still takes his shots at him.

Lage: It sounds like you follow baseball as carefully as basketball.

Newell: Yes. You know, I played baseball a lot more than I ever played basketball. When I got out of college, I played that summer--the early summer, I was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers and played in one of their farm teams in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in the Cotton States League. And boy, that was an experience, I'll tell you what. I get a kick out of players now. Just recently, some of the players were all upset because the manager, Buck Rogers, who everybody seems to feel is an outstanding manager, and his record would indicate it, spoke harshly to a couple of players who weren't performing.

They're paid a lot of money to perform, and it seems ironic, or maybe consistent is a better word, that these teams that are doing so badly, always seem to have two things in common. One, the players are bitching about how badly they're being treated, and two, they're perennial losers. They're so used to losing they think that's a way of life. If anybody wants to shake them up or anything, they're a bad guy.

The other thing is, change the manager. You can't fire twenty-eight players, but you can fire one: the manager.

Lage: Right, that's easier.

Newell: So you fire him. And those teams always seem to be the losers. Those are the losers year after year. We see it in this town. The Angels have had a history of it. Somebody told me that in twenty-seven years, they've changed thirteen managers. Conversely, as far back as you can remember, look at the Dodgers. I don't know how long [Tommy] Lasorda has been there, but I know [Walt] Alston, between them, I'd say in twenty-seven years they've had two managers. One retired. They didn't fire him, he

retired. They don't win every year, but they're recognized as a real solid franchise, and they surely win their share. They have a great support, because there is a consistency and a stability, which is even more. When you change your managers every year, you have no stability. Nobody feels secure. It's what happened to the Clippers.

Lage: And it takes time to build up a system.

Newell: Well, yes. Some players on the Clipper team I imagine have played for four coaches already.

Lage: Okay, we ought to move on. I just wanted to get a little--that will help me with Walter Haas, to see what he was stepping into at that time, and to get the Cal connection.

Newell: Yes. I'm a great admirer of Walter, his wife, and his whole family. His father, and I guess even before, his father's father.

Lage: Yes. They go way back, and forward.

Newell: The Stern family, which I'm not sure--I guess that was his mother's side--

Lage: His mother's family.

Newell: And Stern Grove.

Lage: With the free performances every summer in the city.

Newell: They are the kind of people that have made this country, because they've given back, they've given. Sure, they've been very successful businesswise, but they made it possible for other people to have better lives. I think that's a wonderful trait.

Leaving the Athletic Directorship, 1968

Lage: Now, we're going to get back to you. We left you as you were leaving Cal, but we didn't talk about why you went to the San Diego Rockets as general manager?

Newell: Yes.

Lage: And that was '68. Can you tell me how that came about?

Newell: When I left Cal, I had no idea exactly what I was going to do. When I left coaching, it was the same. But soon after, I had that opportunity to be the general manager of the Rams that I didn't take and instead stayed at Cal. By 1968, I had gone through the wars there, and I was very secure with the football program. I had seen Ray Willsey and his staff survive probably one of the toughest periods that the athletic department has ever had to survive, and that was the memory of Mario Savio and that whole episode of the early and middle sixties.

There had been a change from the people that I originally worked with, in terms of a philosophy. First, Dr. Seaborg, and then Ed Strong. I admired both of those men, and I was privileged to work for them, but I saw a change of attitude toward the whole student life. It was almost, phase out the fraternities, phase out the sororities, and have this free society kind of a thing. It was very difficult for the athletic teams to recruit in that period, because the other schools were talking about, "You go to Cal, you're going to lose your religion, nothing but atheists there, and it's a communist cell."

Lage: That might have been a slight exaggeration.

Newell: It was a slight exaggeration, yes. [laughter] I'm not sure. but the point was that the picture that was presented to the parents of these recruits. Cal and Stanford, USC, UCLA--they all more or less recruit the same players. Now, one school doesn't get all those players, it's kind of divided up, but certain kinds of players will go to Stanford, certain will go to Cal--under normal conditions--some to SC, and obviously some to UCLA. But what happened was, Cal just got kind of excluded in that whole thing, because there was this Cal-bashing at that time. It wasn't right, but that's what happens. It's a dog-eat-dog thing, recruiting. Every wart that Cal had was magnified to the point that it was a cancer, really. It was tough on those coaches, but I give Ray Willsey so much credit, because he's a tough man, and he just didn't give in to it. He persevered and slowly built that [football] program up.

It was difficult, too, because a lot of the alumni were so disturbed--I'm talking about the supportive alumni, of football particularly--were so disturbed at the way the administration had backed off on issues. Whereas Strong was fired because he stood up to an issue. They just ransacked Sproul Hall, and he had all those people arrested, 500 of them. And I think only about a third of them were students. And that should have been an indication that the people that this whole wave of change had brought to Cal were not Cal people. They weren't students. Some of them came from the Haight-Ashbury [in San Francisco], where they screwed up that part of the Bay Area pretty good. They were drifters, so many of them, and just looking for issues.

Lage: So did you get a lot of flak from the alumni?

Newell: I'll tell you, yes I did. Not personally, but many of the athletic alumni were very upset with President Kerr, because they felt that he was never supportive of athletics. I didn't totally concur with that. He was an academic man. I don't think that athletics was a very high priority for him, I'll say that. And I defended him. I had to defend him; I was working for basically the president, as well as the chancellor.

My experience with him when he was chancellor when I came there, was fine. I felt that he was an academic man, but he more than tolerated athletics. I felt that there was a certain supportive thing there when he was chancellor. But when he became president, I guess it changed a little. Because there are certain decisions that you have to make as a chancellor, and they were construed as anti-athletic. When he became president, they were sure he was going to turn Berkeley into Chicago, get rid of football.

Lage: That was the fear of some of the alumni?

Newell: Yes, that was the fear. You see, when you're an athletic director, you've got to go out and meet the Southern Seas [southern California alumni group].

Lage: You sure do.

Newell: And they want to get their point across as far as what they think is wrong with the university and the people that are making it wrong.

Lage: So you were one of the front men.

Newell: I was defending the chancellor and the administration. When you're a coach, one of the most important tenets of coaching is loyalty. You want your players to be loyal to you, and you want to be loyal to your players. I got to the point where I really felt that the university was wrong, from the president on down--the president, chancellor. I felt that it was not an even-handed thing. They were so overly sensitive to any group that was trying for this or that, regardless if the group was students or outside people, whoever they were, there was a cave-in. There was such a tendency to--whatever wheel was squeaking, that one got the oil. It was just again putting fingers in the dike, rather than standing up and meeting issues. They would say, "Let's call a committee and maybe the issue will go away." That's academic--

Lage: Was it the way they handled that black player protest that was the final straw for you?

Newell: That was one of the things that really bothered me. I told you that before.

Lage: Yes, we talked about that.

Newell: When I had that coach hired, who happened to be black, but he was not hired because he was black or white, he was hired because I felt that he had all the ingredients for great leadership and I thought could someday be a head coach. I just felt that he was a unique person, and one that I felt the university shouldn't let get away. Whether or not he stayed in athletics, I felt he could go in the alumni area. There were a lot of things that he was capable of doing. That was one of the things that made me take a look.

But basically, Ann, I got to the point where I really felt I couldn't defend the university, when I was going out to all these different alumni groups, San Diego and all over. I'm not going to get up there and lie to those people that I'm speaking before. And I'm not going to knock the university. I'm not going to knock anybody, because that's disloyalty. It's a free country, and if you don't like what is happening, you have the obligation, I think, to, if you want to make change, make change. But you're employed by these people, and it's just not my nature to knock them.

That was probably the main issue. I just felt I couldn't go before these various alumni groups and try to explain, but even more, support the position that the university had taken on these things.

Lage: When you resigned, did you tell the chancellor these things?

Newell: Yes, I did. As I recall, I wrote him a letter and told him why. Roger Heyns was a nice man, but he came in at a very difficult time.

Lage: He really had a lot to balance as chancellor then.

Newell: Oh, yes. It was a zoo. There was another thing that bothered me in that period. I got to know a lot of the faculty people. I used to play bridge over there at the Faculty Club at noontime. So I got to know a lot of those professors there. During this period, the Academic Senate was taken over by a minority, a real small minority of real committed liberals, ultra-liberals really. Many of the tenured professors that should have been in there voting on issues were not even going to meetings.

Lage: They were playing bridge!

Newell: Probably playing bridge. Maybe that is right, because I remember I used to bring it up, "Why, why, why do you let this minority take over without even any semblance of right-wing reaction, without any kind of a response to this organized minority takeover?" But it happened, time after time after time.

People's Park, an Example of Poor Management of Radical Protest

Newell: People's Park happened I think after I left [1969]. But the People's Park was a perfect example of how shallow, in a sense, the thinking was. There had been a perfect, just a perfect example at Columbia University. There were no issues at that time. The Vietnam thing had died down; there were no real issues. And how they were ever trapped with about three or four days to go to the end of the semester. They had a summer coming up where a lot of those people leave, and there are no issues because there are not that many students. Most of your summer students are not the regular students. They're coming there for a few courses and are not concerned about campus issues.

I couldn't understand, because the issue at Columbia was that they were going to build a three-tiered gymnasium. They had the oldest and the worst gymnasium in the East. They had a need for this. Next to the campus there was a real barren no-man's-land that had had many rapes and bodies found in it over the years. It was a very, very dangerous area, and it was a very low-income, and it was right adjacent to the school. So their idea was, they were going to build this three-story facility, and the bottom story would be for the local community. They would have an entrance there, and the other two stories would be for a regular arena. Not anything like we see at the Forum or Oakland Coliseum, but maybe a 6,000-capacity place. That would be the top. There would be another area where you would have a lot of your other exercises, gymnastics, wrestling and things like that, your physical education courses and teams.

And same thing happened. A radical group protested, "You're taking their land," closing it, taking the land from this poor, actually uninhabited, part of the neighborhood. There was just nothing there. It became such an issue that the academic people backed down completely.

Lage: Even with the idea of the first floor being for the community?

Newell: Yes, and with that entrance on that side. In no way would it be attached to the rest; it would be separate. And sure, it would be something that would help the community. They'd have basketball and other things in there that would be for the community. That was the purpose of it. But as a result, nothing got built. But they had a lot of protests, and they had bottles thrown and rocks thrown and all that stuff. They had a lot of problems that were all fomented by the radical group of probably non-students. But it was as if they were running the local people out of there, rather than providing something for them. Rather than defend themselves and go through with it, and maybe stand a little police hassling and some of the other things that you run into--the protestors know the weakness of the academic people in

those issues. Academics are politicians, so many of them. They think like politicians. They don't want anything that is going to be politically unfavorable. So they backed off and they never did build the building. That area never got that facility that could have maybe saved some lives there, kept kids out of gangs and things like that.

But the point was, it was a real big issue, because it was the only place other than Berkeley at that time that seemed to have that kind of an issue. Later, Wisconsin and some of the others had similar problems. But you see, I always felt that one of the problems Berkeley had was that everything started there. You never had any opportunity to judge what the other part of the country did in a similar situation. They got a chance to judge what you did, whether right or wrong.

At Berkeley, that's where it happens. It is still that way. So you have to be flexible, you have to be alert for these things, but you never know exactly what they're going to be or when they're going to be. One thing you know: Berkeley doesn't follow, it leads. Whether it's down a primrose path or down a dark alley, it's a leader.

Lage: That's one of the joys of being there.

Newell: Well, it's true. That's right. That's Berkeley. But it's got to be even. Hell, when I was coaching there, they had SLATE. That was really a radical-thinking group. I remember a lot of the coaches were really, really upset with them. I kind of got a kick out of them, because I knew Vin [Vincent] Hallinan, who was the father of Patrick Hallinan, a leader of SLATE.

Lage: Yes.

Newell: Brilliant man. His father was a brilliant lawyer. I had known his sons, two of his sons, as I recall, when they were little. I met them when I was USF years before.

Lage: Were they supporters of the USF program?

Newell: Hallinan was at one time, yes. But he was an individual. He was truly a brilliant character. I guess in the courtroom, he was second to none. Anyway, his sons were brought up in a very liberal-thinking environment. I forget what Vince's wife's name was, but she was a brilliant woman, too. I had the opportunity to meet the family in the forties. In fact, when I came to USF, you couldn't get a place. Vin Hallinan was the one that got me the apartment in his apartment house.

Lage: Oh, right.

Newell: You couldn't get a place after the war in San Francisco.

Lage: Did he make you appreciate SLATE? You brought up the connection with SLATE.

Newell: Yes. I wouldn't say appreciate is the word, but made me more understanding. Even though at times I'd read some of the outlandish things they did. But I'll tell you one thing, it made me understand that if you're going to be an athletic director at Cal, you better not have any connection with the ASUC that they had at that time. Because you never knew when a radical group was going to come in. When they came in, one of the first things they wanted to attack was athletics. Because athletics are the only organized sports in the university that are connected with the university, connected with outside groups that are an organized body that can oppose them. I think they know where most of the faculties live when they get into these things, and they know that the tenured people aren't going to stand up on issues, for the most part. And the university fraternities were something they attacked.

Implications of Removing ASUC Control of Athletics

Lage: Do you think that beginning of radicalization of the student body had anything to do with moving athletics out of the ASUC? There must have been other issues that concerned the university as well.

Newell: Of course, Chancellor Seaborg is the one that did that. Of course, I'm not saying I had anything to do with it, but I did tell them that in no way under the present condition would I ever be athletic director. But I think I read in his book that this had started a few years before, if you read his book--[1]

Lage: And it happened at UCLA at the same time. I think it was a universitywide reorganization of athletics.

Newell: It could have been, because it was getting more radical--and I think SLATE had a lot to do with it.

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Newell: You see, the ASUC had a dual head: an athletic director, who was really under the head of the ASUC. At Cal, the system was really kind of exposed when they went looking for a new coach, because as I told you before, they

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[1] Chancellor at Berkeley, pp. 264-279.

were both going in different directions. They had different people that they were leaning on for advice and help.

Lage: It was a strange system.

Newell: Yes. And Chancellor Seaborg, he saw that, and of course, Adrian Kragen too, who was a very, very strong force as an advisor, consultant. I'm not sure what his title was.

Lage: I think he was the faculty rep for athletics.

Newell: He wasn't really the faculty rep, I don't believe so. He was a vice chancellor, and I think maybe a vice chancellor in charge of athletics, student affairs. But they saw the weakness of this, and they saw also the difficulty. For instance, Nibs Price was the coach there for thirty-two years, and all those thirty-two years under the ASUC. After thirty-two years, he retired, and I think his retirement was about $175 a month.

Lage: Oh, so it affected retirement?

Newell: Oh, yes, because they didn't want to fund any money for retirement. They could talk about social issues and the downtrodden, but the people who worked for them didn't come under any of these issues. [laughs]

Lage: I didn't think of that implication, that you're not hired by the university actually.

Newell: Sure. You're not hired by the university.

Lage: And that was true of you when you were coach, wasn't it?

Newell: Yes. And you go way back in the history and find there were always attempts at takeovers when I was athletic director by certain departments. For instance, they wanted to do away with ROTC. They wanted to put a big virology building, as I recall, right in that area. And they wanted to take our baseball [field]. But you go back, and the ASUC owned the property in their name up there where the football stadium is and where Cowell Hospital is [current site of Haas School of Business]. The university wanted that. The university had the property where Harmon [Gymnasium] was. So there was a trade made. It's on record, a trade made. So that basically was ASUC property.

Lage: But when the athletics went to the university, when you became athletic director, didn't that all revert back to the university?

Newell: Yes, it did. But the understanding was that the athletic department had the right to these, even though it was under the university, because while they ceded it to the university, they still had a right to it. I had some people in the legal end that kept me advised. When there would be these attempts at takeovers, and somebody, maybe a Nobel Prize winner would say, "Unless I get this, I'm leaving," that was a big thing. That was always kind of a hammer. So there was a tendency to please those people and to compensate, well, we'll scrimp on athletics.

Lage: I see, take some of that good prime land.

Newell: Yes. So you always seemed to be fighting for what's yours.

Lage: It seems like the track area or the baseball field is always under siege.

Newell: Oh, that was a real prize for academics. And they have taken over some of that land. They've got a building out there in left field, what used to be left field, which is where the teams used to practice all the time. I guess they practice in the stadium now. But as I say, the athletic department was self-sufficient.

Lage: Financially?

Newell: Yes. Well, it had to be. There was no--

Lage: No state funding for athletics?

Newell: No.

Effect of Title IX on Sports Programs

Newell: One of the things that you have to think about is Title IX.[1] Title IX had a tremendous effect on athletic departments. I just read in the paper this morning here that UCLA stopped swimming and gymnastics. The alumni, or the former lettermen, who were supporters of those two sports, went to court to get an injunction so they could keep going, and the judges turned it down. But the hammer that Washington has used is, "We'll take away your grants."

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[1]Title IX of the U.S. Education Code (1972) required federally funded educational institutions to provide equal opportunity for men and women.

But they don't give grants to athletics in Division I schools. You survive on your gate receipts from two sports, principally football. There's no other income to speak of. Certainly not enough to support any other program. Stanford women's basketball may come close, but there are not many.

Lage: The Stanford women draw more than the men now in basketball.

Newell: I know. But even then, when you add up scholarships and all the costs, it probably is way, way short of coming even. But football, and all the ancillary things you get--Rose Bowl, money--

Lage: TV.

Newell: Yes. And the money from bowls. They play in these bowls, too, and share in the total TV package and all. But that basically is football, and your alumni that are supportive in donations are more interested in football and basketball.

Lage: Yes, although they're starting up real support groups now for the minor sports.

Newell: They have to.

Lage: The swimming program has quite a support group.

Newell: That's what they have to do. They really have to do that. They ought to make the women's sports get off their rear. "They've got this and we don't have that," is the theme so often by women's groups. They should go on a campaign of getting support. And they can do that, because some of those sports, if they go to the wives, the women, of these well-heeled alumni, their husbands will donate money just to keep their wives quiet.

Lage: [laughs] But they don't have the tradition of the players going way back that are tied to the teams, because they're such a new phenomenon. The women's sports are new, so they don't have these wealthy alums in the swimming program.

Newell: No, they don't. But a lot of the wealthy alums never played football.

Lage: Yes, but I noticed the names on this swimming club--Splash Club, they call it--supporting swimming and water polo and diving. And a lot of them were in the program over the years. They are men who have been very successful who played water polo or swam at Cal.

Newell: Oh, sure. That's what you have to do.

Lage: But you don't have that with the women's sports, because they don't go back that far.

Newell: I understand that, but what you try to do is to find out who are these supporters of the other sports, and then go after the wives of those supporters. So instead of just supporting football, they're supporting women's tennis too.

Lage: That's a good point. You ought to come back and help us out.

Newell: No! Thank you, I went through that. [laughter]

Starting the Golden C Support Group

Newell: I started, you know, the Golden C.

Lage: Oh, you did?

Newell: Oh, yes. I had a hell of a time getting it by the alumni. Dick Erickson [executive director of the Alumni Association] was very upset that we were infringing upon his group.

Lage: Oh, really? He thought that would take away from the Alumni Association?

Newell: Yes. I don't blame him. It's hard enough for his group to get money, without having another competing group. But at the same time, for our survival, we had to have that kind of support. We finally got, after a lot of tugging and pulling and all, we finally got the chancellor to agree--the president to agree, really--that we had the right. But they put real restrictions on me. One of them was, we couldn't solicit anybody other than the people that we knew were involved in the sports, in these Greek clubs and that.

Lage: Could you go after someone like Walter Haas that was traditionally--?

Newell: Sure, he was, but we had a limit of $100. That's why they called it the Golden C. But later [athletic director] Dave Maggard did an excellent job in getting support. See, when I was given the green light for this, first thing I did was go down to USC. I talked to Nick Pappas. USC had, and I still think has, the most organized and complete athletic support group--not just alumni, but other supporters who never went to the school but have followed USC, football particularly, for many, many, many years. So to me, Nick was the organizer of this master plan they had. He was a good friend

of mine, and I spent two days down there with him. He took me all through what he went through, and how he started it, and where it was now, and how it got there.

So I had a kind of blueprint, but there were certain limitations that I had to follow that he didn't have. But eventually, I could see with Dave where you had different degrees of them. You'd have $1,000, $500--

Lage: Different levels of supporters.

Newell: Yes. But I was only limited to $100.

Lage: It was more then than it is now, but still.

Newell: Oh, yes. It was a lot more, and it was a lot more than we had without it. And another reason I wanted it, and this was probably the reason I was able to sell the academic people, was I wanted control of the money. I mean, control in the sense that it had to be channeled through the university, which this money was.

Lage: Instead of under the table?

Newell: Instead of under the table. See, this is one of the problems we always had before. You had a few of these alumni that were kind of brokers. They were going to certain other alumni without the athletic department really knowing, getting $1,000 or $3,000 or whatever, and taking care of it. But this is the way it was everywhere. And it was that way at Cal; not in my basketball. Nobody touched my basketball program; I would never allow that. But football is a different story. It's bigger, and more people involved.

Lage: Harder to control.

Newell: Yes, and the recruiting is more intense. It was then, anyway, than the basketball. There were certain things they felt that you had to do to stay up with the Joneses.

I was very much against that, because I told you before, it was in a Jesuit moral ethical precept in a theology class that you don't do a bad act to bring about a good result. And it was against the rules to do this, and I just never had it in my program. When I was athletic director, I tried to do things that would allow us to dispense the money, but in a legal way, and more evenly.

Lage: So the Golden C's was a way to get the alumni support legally?

Newell: Yes, and it was NCAA legal. But my biggest problem probably was getting by the alumni. I understood where Dick Erickson was coming from. We didn't want to undercut him, but we were fighting for survival too. Our football team wasn't winning, and when your football team doesn't win, not so many people show up.

Lage: So all the pressure is on the football program.

Newell: Oh, yes. But anyway, Dave Maggard took it to a real high level, and I thought he just did a great job of getting funds and all. We even started that press box up there, just before I left. If you look at that, I think you'll find out that it was approved before I left. But we'd been working on that for some time.

Lage: Well, I hope John Kasser [current athletic director] has good results.

Newell: I get nothing but good reports on him. We have a five-year reunion of my 1959 Cal team. We have it every five years. This June 10, 11, and 12, we're going to the Quail Lodge at Carmel again. John Kasser is going to be one of our guests. We always have guests. Glenn Seaborg, he and his wife have been there, I don't know how many times. But they feel--like I told you, he's one of the team.

IX MANAGING THE SAN DIEGO ROCKETS, 1968-1971

Getting into the NBA as the Rockets General Manager

Lage: Now, I'm going to get you into pro ball. I like talking about the university, because I think we gave it a short shrift in our last interview, but I know we have a lot to cover.

Tell me how you got to San Diego.

Newell: Actually, John Ricksen had called me--and this is well after I had announced my retirement--about the possibility of my going to San Diego and becoming the general manager of the Rockets. One of his clients was a fellow by the name of Jiggs Davis, who was from the Bay Area and had originally invested in the Rockets when they started the year before. Jiggs owned about a third of the team, maybe a little more. Jiggs was a Cal guy, but I had never met him at that time. John asked me if I would I be interested.

I talked it over with Florence, and she always had the foresight, the innate sense of knowing if it was a good or bad move, and she thought it would be good. That was all I needed. I said, "Well, I'll be glad to talk to people down there." So John set up an interview.

I went down and talked with Bob Britebart who was the principal owner. He's the one that started it; he's the one that got the arena built there. Before he got the franchise, he had started the arena construction with Union Oil. He got Union Oil as one of the big contributors to put up this arena that's down there now. It seated about 15,000, which was a big arena at the time.

San Diego was not really a hotbed of basketball. It just wasn't, and hadn't been. Football was very popular at the university, San Diego State,

but basketball had never really had a facility down there. As a result, they just didn't have a lot of basketball interest. And the year before I came there, the Rockets team set a record, I think, for losing. [laughter] But it was a young team, an NBA expansion team.

An Aside: Helping Get Bill Russell to the Celtics

Newell: I was familiar with professional basketball, but I wouldn't ever say I knew a lot about it. It was a different game, and it commanded a different kind of coaching. Because there was the 24-second clock, it probably put a little more emphasis on the athleticism of a player, more than the college game where you put a little more on the intellectual end of it--being able to read defenses and being able to understand patterns and all.

Lage: The kinds of things that you stress.

Newell: The things I stress, yes. So I was kind of a purist. I wouldn't say I wasn't a fan, but I'd go to games. Red [Arnold] Auerbach, who was the Boston Celtics coach, and I were in the navy together, so I always had a rooting interest in the Celtics, because of Red. I helped him with Bill Russell, when he made a famous trade. Saint Louis had drafted Bill Russell, and he made a trade with Saint Louis and gave away two real good players for the rights to Bill Russell. And of course, Bill Russell had so much to do with their great seasons.

Lage: How did you help him with that?

Newell: At that time, Avery Brundage was head of the Olympic committee, and he was very much a stickler for rules. He had the power to disqualify players from the Olympics. He would disqualify players in any sport if he thought there was any professionalism, or he thought there was any hint of an association, while they were amateurs, with a professional group. And also, being out here in the West, Red hadn't seen Russell play. He knew he wasn't much of a scorer, but he also knew that he was a tremendous defensive player. But it was hard for Red to visualize just how effective he would be, because there hadn't been anybody before Bill Russell who really made shot blocking an art.

So in a sense, the evaluation I gave him at the time, and I think Red would tell you this today, was that I really felt that he's going to bring into the NBA what he brought into college, because USF won two national championships with him. He would bring a defensive force that the NBA

had never even thought about. I told Red, "I feel, and I always have felt, that you win through defense. If you're going to win through defense, I don't know what better player in the world you could start with, if you're going to start winning with defense, than Bill Russell."

The other thing was, they couldn't make a contact straight with their coach, Phil Woolpert. So I was able to help, because of my association with Red. Red had Phil tell Bill if this is the contract, would he go for that. That's before they made the trade, when he was thinking about it, if he went to the Celtics.

Lage: Was Bill still on the USF team?

Newell: He was still at USF, yes.

Lage: So they were trading a draft right for him?

Newell: I'm not sure, Ann, if it was a draft right or if they had already drafted--I think it was a draft right, but I'm not absolutely sure on that. The two players were Cliff Hagan and Ed Macauley, who were two All-American college players and very, very successful NBA players. So Red really gave up a lot just on my advice.

Lage: You were at Cal at that time?

Newell: I was at Cal, and Phil had been my assistant at USF. He had succeeded me at USF when I went to Michigan State. So we were close, we were always close. I told you all about our relationship.

Lage: Yes.

Newell: So I would call Phil and I'd say, "This is what Red would give Bill if Bill--" so he could talk to him. But Red couldn't call directly, because if he did that, Brundage would find that out, and he could disqualify Bill from the Olympics among other things. I'm not sure if the season was going on, I'm not sure of the timing, but I think it was probably after the season, as I recall. It was the Olympics, by golly, that was it, because Brundage would have disqualified him from the Olympics if he thought that there was any talk between a professional team and him. I don't know how I got off on this tangent.

Lage: You were saying that your appreciation for pro basketball was primarily through the Celtics.

Newell: Yes. Pro basketball had only been in the West for a few years, and then I became more acquainted with it. But I had been too busy at Cal to be an avid follower. But the Rockets offer kept me in basketball. So I went to talk with Bob. Bob was a great guy, and I really enjoyed the relationship with him. I just felt I could work with him.

The Rockets, From the Outhouse to the Penthouse

Lage: What did you do as general manager?

Newell: Everything.

Lage: You had the coach on one side, and the owner on the other.

Newell: Well, yes, but I had a good owner. And the coach was a good man, Jack McMahon. We had some people that were small owners, but they were in kind of advisory roles. One was a lawyer, and he was the principal one. He didn't like the coach because the coach, he thought, was too fat. Of course, I think this guy weighed about as much as the coach, but he felt coaches were supposed to be slim, I guess. I told him one time, I said, "He's coaching, he's not playing."

So we made the move down there. It was great. The year before I came there, they had this terrible year. The year I came, we got Elvin Hayes, who was a top college scorer, in the draft. He was the player most responsible for Houston beating UCLA in that very famous game they had in the Houston Astrodome. That game set all kinds of records for interest, for attendance, for television numbers and the whole thing. It was, I'll tell you, one of the real historic games. Elvin had a great game, and they beat a very, very fine UCLA team with Kareem [Abdul-Jabbar]. So Elvin was one of our draft choices.

Lage: Did you get in on that draft?

Newell: Not on that draft, no. They had already drafted Elvin. And he wasn't real talented; he was a little problem the first year in terms of going from being a college player to a professional, where they don't coddle you. You're paid like a man, so they expect you to act like a man. But he didn't invent those problems. [laughter] They're still prevalent in many, many cases. There is an adjustment from college to the pros in a lot of sports.

Stu Lantz and Rick Adelman were two young draft picks. Rick was a draft from Loyola, I'm not sure in what round. But in those days, we only had about twelve, fourteen teams in the league, so you could be in the second round and be a good player. So Stu Lantz, Elvin, and Rick Adelman were all rookies during my first year, and that year, we made the playoffs. Our starting guards were those two rookies, and our starting center. We had three rookies, which was unheard of, and we made the playoffs, believe it or not. We were beaten by a really good Atlanta team that had tremendous personnel. We carried them for six games, and in the sixth game, we lost at home. We had them, I think, twenty-five points at halftime. We had beaten them at Atlanta one game, which meant that if we went to the seventh game we possibly could have won it all. We felt we could win it. And I don't know, the wheels fell off in the second half, in one of those things that you see on TV today. No lead is really safe in the NBA anyway, even in those days. But anyway, we lost.

But we went from the outhouse to the penthouse, really, by making the playoffs that year. Everybody expected them to sweep us in four games, and we gave them a hell of a series.

Lage: Did your audience respond? Did you get a following?

Newell: Oh, yes, sure, we turned the attendance around. We came up with a lot of fan support. The NBA was great then. I was the general manager. I had one secretary. I had a P.R. guy. I had a group sales person who was a military man, and he did the services. He was a former navy officer, and so he worked a lot of naval bases and army bases for season tickets, for group sales. Then I had a very bright young guy as my scout. My staff was small but efficient.

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Newell: Bob King was my P.R. guy. He came up with some great ideas. It was great then, because it was kind of the embryonic stage of the NBA, and you're thinking of ways to get people, to increase your market. My total team salary of twelve players was $450,000. Now, that's about what the minimum today is. The average pay today in the NBA, the average individual's pay, is about $1.5 million. That's the average. But of that $450,000, Elvin Hayes got $100,000. So the other eleven guys split the $350,000.

Now, on that team, believe it or not, three present coaches in the NBA were on that team. No, not on that team, but on the next year. Two were on that team, and the next year, I added another one. Two that were on that team were Pat Riley and Rick Adelman.

Lage: Isn't that something?

Newell: Yes. And the next year, we added Rudy Tomjanovich. He was the number-one draft choice. I'll explain that one; that was an interesting one. So presently, there are three coaches, two of them are in the playoffs right now--

Lage: Is that a coincidence, or does it have something to do with your influence?

Newell: No, it has nothing to do with me. It's coincidence.

Lage: It doesn't have anything to do with your interest in the game?

Newell: No. But it had this to do with me, in terms of Pat Riley: Pat Riley was what we call a 'tweener. He's in between positions. He was a forward in college, but he was about six-four. He was a very, very good shooter, and he was a very good college player on a very good college team. In the NBA, he wasn't big enough to be a forward, so he had to be a guard, but he had never played guard. But he was a worker. I think in today's game, because he was a good shooter, that he would have been a much more effective and productive player, because of the watering down of the personnel by the NBA expansion. The three-point shot I think would have been a shot that would have been within his range.

Anyway, Pat was always available for clinics, for speeches, and he was always--you almost could see he was a student of the game or would be a student of the game if he wasn't already. He was a very industrious guy. He was a guy that wanted to get ahead, and he'd pay that price to get there. When I had him later with the Lakers, it was the same thing. You could always rely on Pat, if you couldn't get somebody to do something, whether it was a fee or not, he would always be available.

Lage: To go out and give a clinic to kids?

Newell: Right, go out and talk. In those days, we were trying to sell the game to the community, and very seldom would the players get paid for going out to a luncheon or anything like that. Now, they won't go out of the door for $1,000. But that's the way it was then; that's the way it is now. A lot of the players today say, "Oh, heck, I'm not going; I don't get paid, why should I give up my time?" But Pat was great that way. You just knew that he had a great work ethic. He related to people, he liked to meet people, and he would always be available for clinics. And then when he was with the Lakers, the same thing. In those days, there weren't many players that had camps for kids, and he had one going, I think, in Inglewood.

But that was the first year, and the first year was great, because we made a real breakthrough. We went from the worst record to the playoffs. Then the next year, we came up with a great draft, just a great draft. We had four players on that draft that played regularly in the NBA, which was almost unheard of. The player I drafted first was Rudy Tomjanovich. At that time, Pete Maravich was the most talked-about player in college basketball. He was a great draw, a showtime player, but I had learned that in NBA basketball, that wasn't enough. Because the NBA is different than baseball, different really in a sense than college, at least football. In the NBA, you keep your home receipts. You don't share with anybody, and they don't share with you. The idea there is you promote your game at home. You spend money promoting it, and you get more people coming in. You spend money to do that, you spend money to get the players to get more people to come in, so you keep the money.

Lage: So when you go play in another community, you don't--

Newell: Somebody like Charlie, see, Charlie Finley, he made baseball look like donkeys, because they shared this 28 or 32 percent, whatever it was. You wouldn't make any money at his place because attendance was poor. So he was sharing nothing with you to speak of, but when he went to New York and they would have for a three-game series maybe $600,000, $700,000 gate, and he would have, say, 20 percent of that, 28 percent of that. Hell, he'd make more on the road--like I said--maybe $200,000, $150,000--the prices weren't what they are now, but maybe $150,000. New York would get nothing but a handshake when they'd leave Oakland.

Promoting Attendance: Halftime Entertainment, Shoot-outs and Stewardesses

Newell: We came up with the idea of a woman's free-throw shoot. Now, our thinking was, we want to get the women involved. If we get the women liking basketball, because they played basketball in school, and if we get them coming, they're going to be dragging their husbands. But how can we get the women to come? So we came up with a free-throw shoot for the women. Max Shapiro was the one that came up with it. If they make the free throw, they would get ten dollars worth of groceries. We got a trade-out with a grocery store.

Well, it got better and better and better. We got so damn many women, we almost had to increase the time between the halves.

Lage: All for the ten dollars of groceries?

Newell: Yes. Ten dollars of groceries was a lot of groceries then. And then, to make it even better, we came up with the idea that every woman that won would give us their name and their address. We would invite them to the final game, and we'd have a shoot-off. We would have a lot of different presents, and we even had a car one year. We had a kind of elimination thing. I forget how it worked, but everybody got something. It really created kind of a base of women's support, and it got better and better.

Lage: That's interesting.

Newell: But the backfire of the whole thing was, in those days we had rookie camps. The Russians, they had really a good team. They were touring the United States at that time. So I had good friends in the AAU. I got them to schedule the Russians in San Diego. We made a deal where we would--Bob went along with it--we'd give them so much money, and they'd play our rookie team. So we did, we played in the arena, and we had a good crowd.

So Max came up with an idea, and I went along with it. It never dawned on me that it would turn out the way it turned out, but God, it turned out to be a disaster. We were trying out a new announcer, which was our first mistake. We were going to have a men's shoot-out, and it was going to be a shot at the side about where the college three-point line is, right there. They would get ten dollars worth of something. I forget what the prize was, but it was ten dollars I know.

So about two minutes before the half is over, all these truck drivers come out of the stands. And they all look like truck drivers. And there's this wait for the damn half to get over so they could run for spots and get the early shot. The Russians are looking over their shoulders and see all these guys who aren't even paying attention to them. The Russians think they're going to get mobbed. They had no idea what was happening. These guys came pouring out of the stands. I don't know what caused it. I guess a couple came down, and then a couple more, and pretty soon--they weren't on the court, but they were ready.

Well, when the half is over, bang, they run out there, knocking the Russians aside and everything else to get in line. Well, they get in line facing each basket. We have one line there and one line here. Okay? Well, it's all right at that point, other than the fact that they scared the hell out of the Russians when they rushed out on the court, because the Russians started to get together, they thought they were getting mobbed by a crowd. So finally, we got by that.

Now this damn announcer, this guy we're trying out. He says, "You're lined up on the wrong side of the floor." Well, you've got to go one side or the other. But they lined themselves up this way, see, so that was fine. We didn't give a damn. But now, the guys at the back of this line, they run over here to get in the front of that line. We end up with a black guy and a white guy in a fist fight right in the middle of the floor. God, and I'm just dying up there.

Well, fortunately there was a kid by the name of Kenny Graham who was a linebacker, a very, very popular football player for the San Diego Chargers. He used to come to all the basketball games. He was a good guy, and we all knew him. Kenny was out there, and he was very, very well thought of and very recognizable to anybody there. Fortunately, Kenny really stopped the fight. He intervened and calmed things down.

Lage: Was he down there to join the shoot-out?

Newell: He was down there to take a shot, sure.

Probably Kenny and this kid were the only black guys in the line. There weren't many black guys at the game.

So now, I come out of the stands, and Kenny is taking them off. I said, "Just take them over to the side." And these guys were holding the other guy, now, and calming him down. I said, "For God's sake, make sure that you don't take him where the other fellow is," which they didn't. They calmed him down.

So I'm still out on the court, and somebody says, "Hey Pete, you better get back there." So I go back there, and here we have a security guy with his gun out, pointing at this black player. The black player has a two-by-four, and he's holding it up like this. Whatever happened, I never did find out, but I got Kenny back--I said, "Go get Kenny again." Kenny came back, and I said to the guy, "Put your gun away. For God's sakes, put your gun away." He said, "Well, he's threatening me." I said, "I don't give a damn if he's threatening you or not, nothing's going to happen to you. Just put that damn gun away, because you're going to get in a lot of trouble if you don't."

Then Kenny came and I said, "Kenny, get him to drop the two-by-four." The kid was really upset, and in a sense I don't blame him, because there were a lot of racial things that were yelled at him out there on the floor. I said, "Kenny, get that thing out of his hand. Get that two-by-four out of his hand." So Kenny calmed him down. He knew Kenny; everybody knew Kenny. So he got the thing calm there, and I got somebody to take the guy away.

Lage: Got the security guard away.

Newell: Yes. Got him out of there. I talked to the head security guy, and I told him after this whole thing was over, I said, "Under no circumstances does a guy pull his gun unless he's really, really defending himself." I don't know what happened there; nobody would give me a clear picture of what caused this security guy to intervene, but he could have been a redneck. That's what I figured he was, and now he's got a gun and all that, now he's going to come down on this black person. But anyway, we got this thing settled, but, God, that was the last time I ever held a men's shootaround! [laughter]

That's the big difference between men and women. The women are very lady-like, go out there, and they would enjoy themselves. But what happened with the women, after a while some of the women would wear leotards and shorts and they drew more attention than the team.

Lage: Exhibitionists?

Newell: Yes, kind of an exhibitionist kind of a gal came out there to shoot, and it became almost like a girlie show. So anyway, this went over really good with the women. They wanted to come for these shoots, because of the groceries, so now they've got their husband coming with them. So the attendance kept going up, not big like it is today, but five extra people in those days was good.

So I came up with another idea. A fellow by the name of Don Simonian was P.R. for PSA [Pacific Southwest Airline, based in San Diego]. The head of PSA was an Irishman, former pilot, and a great guy. Don Simonian, who was a former USC P.R. guy, became a P.R. guy for PSA. He came to the games all the time, and I knew Don at USC. We were talking, and Don said to me, "You know, we've got some gals that played some basketball. I wonder if we could get a basketball team." I said, "Gee, that sounds like a good idea. Why don't you call a practice and see how many of them are interested and talk to Andy?" Andy was the owner. "Talk to Andy, and see if Andy will go for it. We'll work out some kind of a game if you can get his okay."

So sure enough, he has a practice, and he gets about twelve girls. In those days, PSA judged the gals on their bodies and their looks.

Lage: Oh, these were the stewardesses.

Newell: Yes, the stewardesses.

Lage: Well, all those airlines did.

Newell: Yes. They gave them uniforms that were miniskirts, and all that. Anyway. So he's got them out there, and I go to the practice, and he actually does have a couple that can play pretty well, and he has a couple that can't play at all but are real good-looking gals. So we invented a game. We'd play the media, the writers--several different groups of media. I think the writers one time, and the TV and radio another time.

Lage: This was at half time?

Newell: At half time. [laughs] I told these guys, I said, "Now, I'm going to tell you one thing. If you're ever going to expect to get back, don't win the game. We win the game. If it is two-to-nothing, we win it. Understand that. We're playing our own rules, and we'll tell you what they are as we go along." A guy by the name of Joe Frivalsky was a PAC-10 official in those days. He was one of the best officials on the coast, but he had kind of retired. So I got Joe to referee the game by himself, and I told Joe, "Joe, we've got a game where we shoot at either basket."

Lage: Just your team, your women's team?

Newell: Yes, just our team. We get to shoot at either basket. If our players are dribbling and they get tired and pick up the ball, they're allowed another dribble and another dribble after that. Well, this one girl was really a sharp-looking gal. She would play, and the guys wouldn't even--they would just look at her. She'd take two dribbles and hold the ball like this. I had another rule that you couldn't get within three feet of the girl with the ball. [laughter] So now she'd throw the ball, [laughing] It may take her five shots before she got over the middle line. It really became a great game. We never did lose.

Lage: Was it every week?

Newell: Every week, yes. And Andy got so caught up in it, he made uniforms for them.

Lage: Now, Andy's the PSA owner?

Newell: Andy was the PSA owner. And boy, they were really skimpy. Let me tell you, they were really skimpy, but they were beautiful uniforms. We started to get people who never went to basketball games just to see the half time. I think they came at half time and left after half time. When our team came out, they had already left. But those gals, they really, really created a great interest. And it was funny. I sat out there and watched, and one time, I'll never forget. We had one girl who was pretty good, really good. She's dribbling the ball down, and she and Joe had gotten together. Joe says,

"Now, lookit, next time you come down, if it's a fast break, I'll be running the wing. Give me the ball; I'll go in for the layup." And here she comes down, and Joe's the official running down the side, and he cuts and she passes--[laughing]

Lage: The official!

Newell: Yes, and he counted it! He made a basket for us [laughing]. If they ever got ahead of us, Joe would blow the whistle and negate the basket. They'd say, "Why did you stop the basket?" "I don't know right now, but I'll think of something." [laughter] But they all loved it, the fans loved it, because of these dainty girls out there. And this one girl who would take two dribbles, she really thought she was playing good, too. She didn't know we had special rules. And this one guy. You're always going to get the show-off, and the guy's going to be the macho guy. We had this one guy that when he got the ball, he was dribbling all over the place. So there's a time out, and I got the captain over. I said, "You know that guy right there? That guy's going to cost you never coming back again, never playing this game again. So you better talk to him, unless you don't care about playing again." I walked away. This guy--they wouldn't even give him the ball. They wouldn't even let him have the ball.

Lage: So the guys enjoyed this game?

Newell: Oh, the guys loved it! Sure, they were out there with all those pretty girls. God, you had so damn many guys that were showing up--it was the media guys, you know. They were either TV or radio or writers for the newspapers.

Lage: That probably created good press for your team.

Newell: Oh, yes, that was part of it. Yes, that's why we played them.

Lage: You had a lot of good ideas!

Newell: Well, yes. But those days, you see, you had to come up with ideas. You were trying to find ways to broaden your base of support. Of course, the best way to do it was to have a real good team, and we were trying to do that too, and we were improving. But you could have the best show in town, and if nobody knew it--. So what you have to do is really promote your product, and make it entertaining, and find ways to develop new interest. That's what it was with the women. Those two things helped us.

Coaching Change for the Rockets

Newell: That year, we drafted Rudy Tomjanovich and Calvin Murphy, who played, I don't know, maybe ten, eleven years in the NBA. I think he has the foul-shooting record right now, 91 or 92 percent. We had a kid by the name of Don Adams who was an eighth-round draft choice, as I recall. He played regular in the NBA for maybe six, seven years for Detroit and Buffalo. Then there was Curtis Perry. Curtis Perry was drafted, I believe, in the third round, and Curtis played on the Milwaukee team that won the championship with Kareem, and then later played with Phoenix when Phoenix went to the finals and were beaten in the finals. Curtis was a very, very, very good player.

Well, then the next year--our attendance kept going up, and we became more accepted. The league was getting stronger too. We didn't make the playoffs the next year; they changed the playoff format and there were more teams in it. But our record was--well, it wasn't great; it was respectable. But we had to make a change in coaching. This one part-owner, he just had it in his mind that Jack McMahon didn't have the respect of the players because of his weight. He had no idea; he was a lawyer and he had no idea what constituted winning basketball, what constituted coaching, or anything.

He was pounding at Bob to make a change, and even then in those days, it's like it is today, you fire a coach, let a coach go, it's hard to get a new coach. There aren't many qualified guys out there that can step in and do better than the guy that you let go. And as I've told you earlier, these franchises that keep changing coaches every year, the franchises always seem to end up at the bottom of the heap, and the players from those kind of franchises are always the ones that are bitching about, "He's not treating me nice. He's speaking harshly."

Lage: But in this case, it was one of the owners undercutting the coach.

Newell: Yes. It was the one owner that just kept carping and carping.

Lage: Was it part of your job to advise the owners on these matters, too?

Newell: Oh, sure. And the owner, Bob, told me, he said, "I think we'll have to make do." We got off to a bad start, and part of the problem was Elvin Hayes. There was a real commitment by the club to Elvin Hayes. Elvin at that time was a problem. Later he became less abrasive and more mature and less of a problem, but at that time, he was a problem to the coach. Unfortunately, he had the ear of one of the owners. He certainly wasn't the one that

caused the change, but he fomented it by the coach not treating him like he wanted to be treated. But the coach treated him about the best he could, under the circumstances, the other players were not that happy with some of the antics that happened.

Lage: And he was making a quarter of the whole team's salary.

Newell: Yes, that's about right. He was making about a quarter of the salary.

Lage: So was he just not submitting to team discipline?

Newell: He was a problem on planes, and he had a temperamental problem. But he kind of grew out of it later.

Lage: Were you called in to resolve anything like that, or was that just the coach's job?

Newell: Yes, there were times when I had to talk to Elvin. Those are problems you hire coaches to do, but I agreed with what Jack was doing. Jack was committed to a five-year contract on this player at a lot of money at that time, $100,000. I guess it kind of fed the feeling that this part-owner had about Jack, by having a player, the star player, uncomfortable or unhappy with him. It just gave him more of an argument than the weight thing, and it was ridiculous. But it must have happened before I ever came there, and I never did find out the genesis of it, what the problem between them was. But I knew there was a problem because he would say some of these things to me in kind of an offhand way, but Bob told me that he really didn't like him because of this weight thing, and he didn't think he worked at it. But he had no measurement of what a coach's work load should be or shouldn't be. It looked to me like he never played athletics.

Lage: He had some influence, though.

Newell: He had enough. So Bob had called me in this day, and he said, "We're going to have to let Jack go." We had gotten off to a bad start, and I knew he was getting heat.

Lage: You mean the team's record?

Newell: The team had, yes. Elvin wasn't happy, but that wasn't an unnatural state either. He wasn't happy a lot. So I talked with the owner, and I said, "It's early." This was Jack's third year; this was the second year I was there. He had just taken the team to the playoffs the year before, but that wasn't enough. Bob said, "We're just going to have to let him go." I argued his case with Bob, but I finally exacted this: "Well, let's let him take them on

this trip, and let's give him a chance. Let's call him in and sit down, and we'll talk." So I got Jack, and I said, "Jack," and he knew he was in trouble, because this guy had talked to too many other people that Jack knew. So Jack and I and the owner sat down, and the owner agreed then, because we were on about a five-game road trip--which is kind of a tough way, when you're on a road trip, to make an assessment of a coach because you don't win many games on the road in the NBA. But anyway, he said he would, he'd go, and then Jack and I talked about this one owner.

I said, "Jack, that guy, I don't know what the hell ever caused it, but that guy has really been carping and carping and carping at you with Bob. I don't know what the reasons are." He said, "I don't either." That's about the only thing he ever said, "I don't know why either."

But anyway, this road trip didn't work out. They had some problems on the trip, and I can't remember exactly what they were, but Jack knew about halfway through the trip the way that things were going that he was finished. So when he came back, I had to make the change. But I told the owner before just exactly what I'm telling you, "You've got to realize, when you make this kind of a change, you're not just going to come up with a coach. It's very, very difficult to come up with a coach in this league to begin with. And secondly, you have to realize that Jack did coach this team to the playoffs. And this is a young team; it's a precedent to have three rookies as starters."

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Newell: But the coaching change was made and I had to find a new coach. A coach, Alex Hannum, was available and interested. He was living up north, and he was unemployed at the time. I knew Alex Hannum from his days at USC as a player, and I went back a long way with him.

Lage: He'd had coaching experience?

Newell: Oh, yes, he'd won the championship. In fact, he's the only guy who's won two NBA championships with two different teams. So I called Alex. When we let Jack go, I went up north. I didn't do this until after Jack went. I made Siegfried, who was a veteran player, the interim coach. He was a tough kid from the Boston Celtics I got from Red Auerbach.

Lage: He was on the team?

Newell: He was on the team, he was a player. I made him the interim coach, and I went up north. In those days, you didn't have an assistant coach.

Lage: Wow, that's a change.

Newell: No, you never had an assistant in those days. So I talked to Alex, and Alex wanted badly to get back into the NBA. He'd been in the ABA, and then got let go in the ABA, so he was without a job. And the NBA I don't think was that interested in him at that time, because there were jobs that he could have easily fulfilled, but they didn't hire him.

He was very, very happy at the opportunity to come in. I had dinner with him and his wife at their home there up in Oakland. He'd been at the Oakland franchise. So he agreed to come down and pick up the team. Alex was really a very physical kind of a coach, and he had been successful. We had an attractive team, because it was a young team, and we had a lot of good young personnel. But the problem was to get Elvin to go along with the flow.

Lage: And you talked to the new coach about that?

Newell: Oh, yes, he knew. He had all the confidence, "Oh, don't worry, I'll handle him." Well, in his own way, he did. But if they thought Jack was abrasive to Elvin--. You got to the point where Alex wanted to take him on hand to hand, and he let him know it. Elvin was kind of afraid of Alex, I think, and rightfully so, because Alex, when he was a player, he was tough--he was kind of a hatchet man. He'd set a screen, and you'd feel it for weeks. He was a very, very tough player in college, and certainly in the NBA. He had a reputation of being a very, very tough guy.

Lage: So he used the same style with his players.

Newell: Yes, with his coaching too. So he ended up the season pretty well. [tape interruption]

The Rockets and the NBA Draft

Lage: Now, let's see, you had just finished talking about the Rockets' new coach. What's next?

Newell: Well, that year ['70-'71] our top draft was a kid by the name of Bingo Smith. It was a weak draft that year in terms of depth. Bingo was kind of an undersized small forward, but a tremendous shooter. One thing that we didn't have an abundance of was outside shooting. Bingo was just a fine

shooter, and a smart player. But as I say, he was only about six-four and a half, six-five at the most, which was small for a small forward.

That next year was an expansion year. You were only allowed to keep eight players. Bingo came off the bench for us. I'll never forget that draft. We didn't make the playoffs. They had changed the playoff format, and they didn't have that many teams in it then. We had to put out four players on the expansion draft list. The Lakers won the championship, as I recall. They didn't have what they have now, when they take one player from you, they can't take another. I think we lost three players. We lost Bingo Smith, and we lost Pat Riley and one other player.

Pat was hurt that year. He had started off really good, and then got hurt. He had the most severe ankle sprain I think I've ever seen. His ankle was three times the normal size. He came down on somebody's foot, which is the worst kind of an ankle sprain to get. So he was out for the year after really a good start. He was hurt right early in the season. Because he hadn't played for us, we had to put him on the list. We had a young team, and it was a tough choice. We gambled on Bingo Smith, but Cleveland picked him up.

Then I think we lost somebody else, but then we lost Pat Riley, which really burned the heck out of me. I think we lost three players. I don't think the Lakers lost anybody. And they win the championship, and we're struggling.

Lage: And this is something you couldn't control?

Newell: No, the way the rules were then. They could draft all four of your guys. On the one hand, it showed that we had some pretty good personnel, because they were taking our players, even though we didn't go to the playoffs. But we had to put the guys out there. In the regular draft following the expansion draft, we picked four rookies who more than made up our losses in the expansion draft: Rudy Tomjanovich, from Michigan; Calvin Murphy, from Niagara; Don Adams, and Curtis Perry.

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Newell: So we had the four rookies and then the players that we had, Adelman and Lantz and Elvin Hayes, and a guy named John Block, who was a big six-ten forward. We lost Bingo, who went on to Cleveland, a great career. In fact, they retired his number here a couple of years ago. The fact that we drafted him, brought him into the league, was some satisfaction, because we had him rated higher than anybody else, and it made us feel good that we were able to recognize the talent that he had, and that he went on to be one of

the all-time great Cleveland players. He wasn't that highly regarded, and he played for Tulsa, as I recall. He was not that highly regarded in the general draft, I don't think.

Lage: How did you recognize his talent?

Newell: Because he could shoot the ball. I had a great young scout, Frank Hamlin. Frank is one of the best assistants with the NBA. He's currently with Milwaukee, with Dunleavy. Frank was my scout. What happened, Max Shapiro, who had been in that position, went into business for himself. He opened up summer camps, and had one of the best summer camp programs, a number of summer camps that he later sold for a lot of money; he made a lot of money off these summer camps. But he went into that business and left the NBA.

Max recommended that I talk to this young fellow that played at Syracuse and was out here in the West. Well, Frank was the free soul of all free souls. He fit the description of what I needed. He came in with low pay; he didn't need much money. In fact, we kid about it now. He said, "One way I got by, the first three months, I slept in my car." [laughter] And I'm not sure he didn't.

Lage: So you didn't pay him much!

Newell: No, we didn't pay him much. I forget what we paid him, but it wasn't much. But here he had never done anything like this, but really, I had an interview with him, and there was just something about him that I really bought. He was just out on a vacation, before he was going to go to work. He was from Indiana. He was really a free soul. San Diego was his town.

Lage: What made you think Frank could spot basketball talent?

Newell: Well, talking with him, and just talking about players. He played with Dave Bing. There was just something about him that I liked, and I said, "Well, I'm going to take a chance with him." I tell you, if I gave him three meals a day at that point, he would have taken it, because he was running out of money. All he had was his car, and he was living it up. I told him, I said, "The only thing you're afraid of is a good night's sleep." That's about it, too, because he really bought the community, and he had more girlfriends than any five guys I've ever seen.

But he just did a terrific job. That draft we had with those four players may be one of the best drafts that any team ever had in the NBA.

Lage: So he was good at going out--

Newell: He was great. He was unmarried, and he'd give all the time, and he'd listen. Whatever I told him, he listened, and he tried to do. I said, "When you go, I want you to listen, I don't want you to talk. You have a lot of guys out there that love to talk to the other scouts, and the more they talk, the more you're going to learn. You just listen. It's all right to pal around with them, go have a drink after the games that you're scouting, but just listen." And he did. He was a really good judge, and even to this day, he's an excellent judge of talent.

Somehow he communicated that to me. You ask me the question, and I can't answer why. Sometimes you think back why you did things and there's no earthly reason why you did them.

Lage: You had a feel.

Newell: I had a feel. And it was proved right, because even today, Frank has got one of the best reputations in the NBA as a basketball man. As I say, he played at Syracuse, and he was very conversant with the eastern basketball. Of course, we all scouted then.

Lage: So you all went out?

Newell: Yes, Frank and I both did. We didn't have that big a staff.

Lage: Would he find people for you to go out and look at, was that the way it worked?

Newell: Yes. Well, I would trust his judgment. Now, this kid Don Adams, he saw Adams play in December and really liked him. But Adams had had a lot of problems there. He was not an easy guy to coach, and he had problems with the coach, and he was a very opinionated guy. He was a black kid from Northwestern that kind of had a superiority attitude in terms of other blacks because he went to Northwestern, which is an academic school. That was the kind of perception he gave, and he was not an easy guy. But the guy could play basketball, really understood the game. Was not that gifted as a player, but because he understood the game, he was sharp, smart as hell on defense. He was a good passer. You could win with him. He was a player you could win with. But he was not a great shooter. If you put him out with twenty-five NBA guys shooting the ball from twenty feet, he'd probably be the twenty-fourth or twenty-third or twenty-fifth in terms of accuracy. But he could score, and he had a good career. Frank picked him.

I got Curtis Perry because he played for a kid that played for me, and he had given me a run-down on him. He knew me, and he proved right. We

brought him in to camp and we liked him, and we drafted him. He knew Calvin Murphy pretty well, because he played against Murphy. And I knew Tomjanovich, because I had been scouting in the Middle West before. He was a great shooter and a big guy and a real good person. We drafted him first that year.

I told you before that I caught a lot of flak because I didn't take Pete Maravich. Pete Maravich turned out to be just a wonderful person with a very untimely death that was totally unexpected. But in college, Pete's team, LSU, never won. They never won anything. Probably in his whole college career, he was about 500 percent, and they weren't even playing the kind of competition that LSU plays now. I just felt that you couldn't win with Pete. He would draw a lot of people in your building for the first few games, and he would draw a lot of people in the buildings where you played, because he was a very spectacular player, but you don't get any money out of that. What you were trying to do was win, and if you're going to have a showtime player, you're not going to win.

Now, Magic [Earvin Johnson] was a showtime player, but he was a player that you could win with because he made other players better.

Lage: So when you say a player that you can win with--?

Newell: Yes, a player that makes other players better. That was the difference between Magic and Pete. Pete really didn't make other players better. He'd do these spectacular things over his head, but the problem is, he would just stagnate your offense, he didn't play any defense, and there's a deterrent effect as far as your team.

Lage: They stop and watch?

Newell: Well, not that; they kind of resent that they don't get the ball. Here he's dribbling here, dribbling there, and he's making all these crazy shots. He could pass the ball; that wasn't the problem. But it was only after he had started something and his play didn't work that he'd lay the ball off to somebody. That was usually the case.

But he hadn't won, and I didn't think you could win with him. We were trying to win a championship--that's what I told Bob. Because everybody said, "Oh, boy, they get the first pick." We got the first pick, and everybody, "Oh, the first pick is going to be Maravich." But we didn't take Maravich. He went second and through some kind of a trade or something, Atlanta got him. Atlanta had a hell of a team, but in three years, the team was in shambles. They had a tremendously talented team, but they started bitching.

Lage: But they fell apart because of Maravich?

Newell: Well, yes, because it's kind of disheartening. It's always showtime, and they weren't that kind of a team. They were a good, fundamental, hard-working unit, and you can't have a unit with a player like that.

Magic was exceptional because he created things for other people. You'd win a game, and Magic may score three or four points. He may score twenty-five, but he scored twenty-five when one of your players was not shooting well or was hurt. When you needed points, he could, and would, come in and score the points. But Maravich--and I caught a lot of flak, but it didn't bother me, because you do things that you think are right.

I've told you this, that I think the most important person in your life to satisfy is yourself. If you're comfortable with what you do, then if other people aren't, that's their problem. But if you're comfortable with whatever it is, and you've thought of all the ramifications of whatever it is, and you're still comfortable, you do that. It may not please other people, and it may be contrary to what people expect.

Lage: But in this case, you had to convince your owner, and maybe your coach and whoever else--

Newell: I had to convince the owner why. He liked Tomjanovich too, because we had Rudy and his agent out and all. And I told him, because I'd seen this happen before, with Franklin Mieuli and his Golden State Warrior team. He had a superstar, Wilt Chamberlain, but he couldn't win because the chemistry was wrong.

Franklin and I were close, and we always had been. When I was at Cal, Wilt was one of my favorite players, incidentally. Wilt was with the Warriors then. He'd come with the Warriors when they came to the Bay Area. He drew there, initially. Wilt, until Michael Jordan, I think was the greatest single draw that they've ever had in the NBA because everywhere Wilt would play, there would be a crowd. I know in San Diego, boy, when Wilt was with the Lakers, I loved to see the Lakers come. The coach didn't, but I did, because Wilt would fill the place. He did that all over.

However, at home, you're not splitting the gate receipts with the visiting team. It goes back to the Maravich thing. You're not splitting with those people. You're paying the big salary to this player, and they're drawing a lot of people out of town, but you get nothing. At home you aren't winning so your superstar is not bringing in people.

Lage: But doesn't he draw the home crowd too?

Newell: After a while, no. What draws the home crowd is winning. Now, what happened with the Warriors, they weren't winning. They were losing, and they weren't drawing anybody. They had Wilt, and they had [Nate] Thurmond, who turned out to be a Hall of Fame center and a great, great center--maybe one of the best defensive centers totally, other than Bill Russell who was a shot blocker, but Thurmond was just a great all-around center. Particularly Kareem and players like that would say that he was the toughest man to play against at that time.

So Franklin had the problem, he's paying all this money, and they're not drawing. They're not winning, they're not drawing. So he had to make a decision, because he was operating from a low income base. He made the decision to trade Wilt and move Thurmond up. He traded Wilt back with Philadelphia. He went back to Philadelphia, and then the Lakers got him after that.

So that imprinted in my mind that yes, if we're not winning, if I don't think he can win, he's not going to draw people after the first turnaround. How many times do you have to see a guy dunk a ball? It's great if you're winning, but if you're losing. And we're trying to build a solid franchise, and showtime never did appeal to me anyway, from a basketball standpoint.

So I held out very strongly, although I didn't have to do a lot of convincing on Bob. But he was catching heat too: "You've got to take this great performer." Well, he filled our building when he played for the other team--

Lage: And that was what you wanted.

Newell: I feel we made the right choice. And Rudy made the All-Star team, and he was a solid player. He's probably one of the great players in the history of the Rockets franchise. So that was something that was an interesting thing at the time. But again, you do things that you think are right, and for the right reasons.

Like I hired Frank, which defied all logic, and in a sense, drafting Rudy over Maravich defied logic, except to a real basketball person who knows what it takes to win. Because I knew Rudy was an unselfish player and a kid that had a lot of improvement ahead of him. Just about the nicest person you'd ever find in your life. Not that Pete was a bad guy; he wasn't, but Pete was a little wild, and his lifestyle caught up with him. Then he got religion, and he ended up the latter part of his life helping just a hell of a lot of people with his religious beliefs and his commitment to helping other people.

"Do You Miss Coaching?"--Comparing Coaching to Management

Lage: What was it like to not be the coach at those games?

Newell: Ann, it's a funny thing. People always ask me this: "Boy, do you miss coaching?" You know, when I got out of coaching, I realized I really didn't like coaching that much. I liked it because it was part of the whole process. I love teaching. But the coaching part--

Lage: Did you have a lot of tension the way you did when you were coaching?

Newell: Well, I always had tension, sure. But my biggest tension was before the game, thinking about all the things that could happen. But the way I taught, the way I coached my players, I always felt my part-method teaching would encompass any kind of a defensive situation they could run into. I expected them to be able to read and react. Whatever the defense was giving them, they could recognize. I really encouraged their intercommunication, sharing thoughts that they may have that would help each other. I told you, the first year they allowed the coaches to talk to the players at the sideline, I really hated that rule.

Lage: When was that?

Newell: That was back in the forties, late forties. I hated the rule, because I felt I had my players taught well enough that they could play the game without any more input from me during the game, other than substitution. I always felt that way. Even at Cal, at time-outs, nobody ever, ever heard me ranting and raving at the time-out. I'd talk and say, "Looks like such-and-such is open," we would talk that way. When you teach, as they say, every conceivable way to defend the player or the two-man game, I would let the defense execute. I would explain what the counter was, and then have them execute it. I wanted them to read and react to counter what the opponent did.

Lage: But how tense did you get when you were not the coach? Of course, you went through this as the athletic director, as well as general manager.

Newell: I just took a philosophical look at it. I'd feel sorry for the coach who would have to go through all the pain. I would worry more, when I was with the Lakers and with San Diego, and even with the Warriors, I had a hell of a time watching a game from the stands. I'd have to get up and walk around outside.

Lage: Now, why was that?

Newell: Well, I'd get the tension. It never bothered me coaching, once the game started. Technicals, I never got technicals as a coach. My players never got technicals--

Lage: But you did use that towel a lot.

Newell: I used the towel. [laughter] No, the towel was my solace, my crutch. The only friend I had in the world was that towel, and I would say things--as I say, if I ever spoke them out, I'd get not only technicals, I'd be ruled out of the game for what I called the official. But I managed to keep it just between me and the towel.

Lage: But as general manager, you got up and walked around?

Newell: I got up. I remember when I was with the Lakers, we were playing Chicago in the playoffs, and God, I couldn't stand it. They were doing some dumb things. It wasn't the coach, but the players were--it was one of those games. And God, I get up and I'm walking around. Ben Bentley was the P.R. guy. He's a very famous guy in Chicago. He has that TV show that Carmichael and those guys are on. Anyway, Ben was a fight promoter; he was a fight publicist. He was with Chicago; we're in the playoffs, and we're playing at the Forum. He's like me, he can't stand to watch for too long either.

So I get up, and I'm walking out in the parking lot. In those days, the parking lot wasn't as well-lit, and it was really a no-man's land. It was really a dumb place to walk. So I'm walking out there, and Ben says to me, "God, Pete, you're liable to get mugged walking out there like that." I said, "Ben, what the hell do you think I'm walking out here for?" [laughter] I wanted to have somebody hit me in the head, things were so bad inside.

So anyway, that was the way. I still do; even when I'm at Cleveland, I have a hard time sitting down watching a whole game. I have to get up and walk.

Lage: What about on television? Do you watch a lot of games?

Newell: I'll get up and walk away from it sometimes. Yes, I watch games, but if it's something--

Lage: Is it because the game makes you--you're sitting a long time now, I feel guilty for making you sit this long.

Newell: I don't know. It's just the tension that I start to feel because I see things that I think they should have done. I'm not blaming anybody, but it's almost

like you see the thing happening, and then you get a dumb-ass call from the official, and then that really sets me off. Then I start to talk to the television, say, "What the hell, make up your mind what you're going to call," and all that. And then the next thing I know, I'm walking around again. I have Roger in watching the game, "Tell me what's happening." And then I'll watch it again. I have a terrible time.

But, as coach, before the game I was in a terrible state of mind, but once the game started, it would unfold before me, I would--. The towel was a crutch, but it was more for me to talk to and, as I say, rather than yell at the officials, it helped me deal with that. Because I would get as upset as anybody at officials. But I never made a demonstration, I never tried to make them look bad. I never got up and got the crowd on them. I never did anything like that. I never believed in that. I never wanted my players to ever be a part of that, either. You never saw one of my players ever rag an official going up the court. He may look like this, "What was that all about?" or something, but that would be the extent of it. At Cal, I never had a player get a technical, and I never got a technical.

And I feel that's the way it should be. I think that's all part of the discipline that you try to teach. You have to learn to take things and go on with your life and try to learn from it, whatever it may be, even if it's wrong. But you can't keep looking behind you; you're going to be stumbling over what's ahead of you.

Lage: But don't some of the coaches almost deliberately get on the officials?

Newell: Sure they do. Yes.

Lage: Thinking it affects their future decisions? Do you think it affects the officials?

Newell: I think it affects the team.

Lage: But does it affect the official?

Newell: Some it affects one way, and some the other way.

Lage: So you don't know how it's going to affect--

Newell: No. But I think it takes your concentration away from the game. I'm not saying that officials don't cause you to really be upset, because in your mind, you know they called it wrong. Maybe not in their mind, but in your mind. But at the same time, the flow of the game keeps going, so you've got to go on with the game. You can't allow yourself to be distracted.

I always felt that when you stepped on a court, you had to be positive, and I didn't want a player to ever say, "The lighting is bad, or this is bad." I had a kid at Michigan State. He was only a sophomore. The first time he'd ever played at Wisconsin he came in and he said, "Oh, these are terrible backboards, terrible rings." I said, "Do they really bother you?" "Yeah."

So I walked over to this guy--and he was going to start. I walked over to the scorer, and I said, "I'm making a substitution." I put this other player in. Now we get ready for the game, we introduce the players. I said, "Hey, I'm putting so-and-so in there. I want you to sit down. I don't want you to have any kind of an emotional problem that you evidently seem to have with the backboards and rings here, so I'm just going to take that problem away from you, because you're not going to play, you're going to watch the game with me tonight." God almighty, he couldn't believe it. I sat him right next to me, and I never had another word from him or anybody else about any negative things about the other person's court.

Lage: Did he play at all?

Newell: No, I never put him in. I was trying to teach him that you've got to learn to adjust to things. You can't have everything your way, everything you want. If the rims are tight, the rims are tight. It means a longer rebound, so you make that adjustment. You don't start throwing rocks at the other team because they've got tight rims, or allow this negativism. You have to have positive thinking. In shooting, you've got to think how the ball's going to go in, not how it's going to miss. But I never heard another player ever bring up the backboards.

Lage: I bet they didn't, after that.

Final Years with the Rockets and the Move to Houston

Lage: Let's wind up the Rockets.

Newell: Well, the next year, the '70-'71 season, we had some injuries, like all teams do, but we didn't have a good year. Alex Hannum, the coach, had a health setback that didn't help at the time, because in those days, you didn't have assistant coaches. We had this player, Siegfried, who was the real veteran on our team, take over as the coach. He did all right, but the whole season was just kind of out of sync. We really anticipated a lot better year, and it didn't happen.

Let me get the seasons straight. Sixty-eight-'69 was my first year; '69-'70 was the second. Yes, this was it: '70-'71. We're still in the '70-'71 season. At the end of that year, Hannum, the coach, decided he was going to go to Denver in the ABA. He got this offer, and suddenly it happened. This is really interesting here. My trainer was in the navy, and we made a change in the trainer. He was going into something else. Also we had a problem with our announcer also working baseball. The owner had an understanding of exclusivity with him, and he was very disturbed. Of course, we all were, because it took away from our early season basketball. So we had to make a change there. So I had to make a change in the trainer, the P.R. guy, the announcer, and the coach.

I got Tex Winter, who was a very, very successful, well-respected and well-known coach at the University of Washington and a coach at Kansas State of great success. He'd done a fine job up at Washington, but they'd had campus problems up there, some racial problems. His wife was fearful for their children, who were in high school at the time, and wanted to move out of the area, so he was available. I was able to get him to be our coach. Although he hadn't coached in the NBA, he was a good solid fundamental coach, and I felt he would be a good coach in the NBA.

I was able to get Art Echman, who was an outstanding announcer, I felt; in fact today he is one of the top TV people in Atlanta.

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Newell: And I got a very, very good trainer, with an excellent background and well thought of, and I was very fortunate to get him. He was a real professional. He had a lot more experience in training than the fellow that he replaced.

And then I got John Thompson, who was at the University of Washington, to be my P.R. guy, public relations. He was very experienced. In fact, John runs the Fiesta Bowl and has for a number of years. Very outstanding guy. So I was able to get really a good, solid staff, most all of them from college, but they had no problems, never did have a problem of adjusting. And all went on in their careers to be very, very successful.

And then I got a bombshell. In June, the owner called me in. We were in Boston at the meeting. The owner called me in and said, "Pete, I've got some news." "Well, what is it?" It was the morning. He said, "I've just sold the team to Houston. The franchise is going to move to Houston." This was in June 1971. I said, "My God, I can't believe it. It's so sudden. How could you possibly move a team now to Houston? Hell, we've been selling season tickets--" our season ticket sale would indicate we'd be up about 25 percent. We were already about the middle of the pack in season

tickets, but we had gone about 20, 25 percent already in June over what we had ever done. And we had every indication of a great year.

Now, that franchise had been bought for $1.75 million in 1967-68. They got this offer of $5.6 million from these Houston people, and it was about a $4 million profit, and this lawyer and all these other guys were pushing Bob to sell. Bob really didn't want to sell, but we had problems with the city. San Diego gave baseball I think $250,000 a year for publicizing the city, and they wouldn't give us the time of day. We were there before baseball; we were there a couple of years before baseball ever came in. They wouldn't give us our share of parking; they wouldn't let us change the parking costs or anything. As I recall, they let baseball keep all the parking money. And then they put restrictions on our advertising in the arena.

Well, these things were really important because we still weren't drawing that many people. Unless you were winning, you had to have ancillary income.

So anyway, all these things compounded into a very negative reaction. This one lawyer that was so interested in getting Jack McMahon out was the guy that was supposed to be the mediator between Bob and the city, and all he did was throw gasoline on the fire. I really think to this day that he was really happy to--I think he had 5 percent of the club or something--to get his 5 percent and run. Bob was a good friend, and Bob was a good man, the owner. I don't think he really, down deep, he ever wanted to sell. But Jiggs, who brought me in there through John Ricksen, Jiggs in his business was having some financial problems, and he needed the money. He was very much interested in selling. It's too bad, because if those people just held that team, it's worth $100 million or more now, right in there. Plus all the teams make money now, even if they don't draw anybody, because you get NBA properties, you get this television money, you get a lot of things that you didn't get much of then.

So it was too bad, and it just seemed that after we left, other teams came in to San Diego, and one team just raked the community really, one guy did, in a sense. I heard the travel agency we used went under because they had such a heavy account that was owed by the team, and the team went into bankruptcy and never paid, and the agency went right under. Also, a printing outfit was teetering, because they hadn't been paid. It was just too bad. They'd had a couple of other attempts at basketball there, and then they finally ended up bringing a Buffalo team there. It was doing pretty well, and then they sold it, and that's when this Sterling got hold of it, and as soon as he got hold of it, then he moved it out of there. They have never reestablished. And we were really getting to the point where we were going

to be established, because we were getting to the point where I think we could win, because we had enough ingredients. But Hannum leaving was kind of unexpected. We had no idea. They didn't call us, and we didn't talk to them. In those days, you didn't do that, I guess. But the owner wasn't that enthralled with Hannum anyway.

Lage: Did you ever consider going to Houston?

Newell: I went as a consultant. The main owner, a fellow by the name of Wayne Duddleston, didn't have the first clue. I'll just quickly tell you. They had, I think, seven or eight home arenas, from El Paso to San Antonio to Dallas. Well, in June, they had already made the schedule for the next year for the NBA, and what they did was cross out San Diego and put in Houston. Well, in those days, you'd play L.A. on a Friday and maybe Seattle at home on a Saturday, and then you'd play up at San Francisco on Sunday. Well, when you change to Houston, you go all the way out here to play the Lakers, go all the way to Houston to play Saturday and then go all the way to Seattle for the third game.

Our bills and our mileage had to be three times anybody else. Four times that year we had to start the game an hour and a half late because the plane was late coming in. From Seattle, it was almost impossible to make a seven-thirty game the next day. There were no flights out to Houston. You have to start in the morning, and starting at Seattle or Portland in any morning is a very precarious scene, because you may not get out until the next morning. That's what happened. Anyway, it was just a mess. [tape interruption]

Now, I wasn't part of this whole thing.

Lage: You weren't general manager now?

Newell: No. The funny thing on this, I had a four-year contract. A lawyer from Cal, a really nice guy, made the contract. I had the contract and I gave it to him; he just volunteered this. He put a provision in there and at the time he said, "Put this in there, just to protect you, Pete." And it was that in the event the club moved, I was still paid for the terms of the contract and did not have to move with the club.

Lage: Ah. That was a nice--

Newell: Yes, it really was. It never even dawned on me that they'd ever move the club. Now, the way that clubs move in the middle of the night, I would have thought, hell, that could happen. At that time, I didn't think it could happen. Anyway, I had that, and so they had to pay me.

Then, another thing happened. I get a call from Franklin [Mieuli]. He's back there in Boston for the owners' meeting. He calls me and says, "Pete, I've got to see you. There's something here that's really interesting I think you need to know. I'm going to come out to San Diego."

So I got him a place at Vacation Village there, and he came out. I picked him up at the airport. He had a transcript of the owners' meeting, that all the owners got, about this move to Houston, because they had to okay the sale to Houston. In it it says that I'm part of the whole thing, that I go with the club. There's no if and ands about it, in terms of what was being presented to those people, regardless of what my contract said. They ignored that, at least the truth of it.

He said, "I can't believe," because we'd talked about--

Lage: Franklin knew about your contract?

Newell: Yes, he knew about my contract. So I said, "Well." I went to see a lawyer there, former Cal football player, Jimmy Marinos. I said, "Hey Jimmy, what about this? Why don't you look at my contract and give me some advice?" Jimmy did and said, "Hey, Pete, they've got to pay you." I said, "Well, this owner, this lawyer, this 5 percent owner," whatever he was, "he says I have to move. He didn't tell me; he never told me. He told Bob. And when I talked to Bob, he said, `What's his name says--'" I said, "Bob, you've seen the contract. What are you trying to tell me?" He said, "Well, I agree, Pete. I don't want it to be any problem," because hey, they've just made a $4 million profit. And I was part of it, because I had drafted a lot of these players, and I--

Lage: That's what made the franchise worth something.

Newell: I had taken a team that had set a record of losing, in a sense--not as the coach, but now probably we would have been about the fifth best team in season tickets at the way we were going, and we'd established ourselves as a pretty good franchise, because that's why they were willing to pay this money to bring it to Houston.

But anyway, I said, "That isn't so. I'm not moving, and this is a contract we signed." He said, "Well, that's what I understood." So I sat down with him. I made a mistake, I really did, at the time. But I couldn't see how they could not recognize that they had made a lot of money on this thing, and I had a hell of a lot to do with it. The thing where I made the mistake was that I said I would go to Houston as a consultant, but I'm going to get some extra revenue for it. I'm not going to do it under this contract.

So they agreed to pay me--I forget how much they owed me, about $28,000 or something like that, and they agreed to an extra $15,000 or so.

So I went, and I got their schedule changed a little. They hired some young kid to be the ticket manager, and he didn't know a damn thing about it. I had had a lot of experience at Cal as the athletic director.

Lage: Did you have to move to Houston?

Newell: No, no, I stayed in San Diego and I commuted. I'd be there and stay a week, and then I'd come home for two or three weeks. I'd go back and forth, and then I was scouting. It worked out okay that way. But there was a lot of traveling in the thing, and they got me an apartment there and I had the use of a car, because Houston is a lot like L.A., everything is kind of spread out.

So that worked out fine, and the general manager was a great guy, but he was a writer and had no idea at all of general managing, Mickey Herskowitz, a very famous writer. I liked Mickey, and so that's one of the reasons I really offered to help them. I could have easily connected with something else and made more money, and they'd have had to pay me the balance of the contract. I didn't have to do this, because there was nothing to indicate that I'd have to give them back any money, but I did it for the year, and I helped them.

The reason I really did it was I had all these people that I had talked into coming to San Diego, and now they've got to go to Houston. I really felt an obligation to them, and that's the only reason, because I really didn't want to go down there. As it worked out, I didn't get all the money that I was supposed to get from them. They still owe me money, but the ownerships have changed two or three times, I guess, since then.

Lage: You're probably not going to collect that.

Newell: No, I don't think I'll collect. I've just given up.

But what happened, now I finished the season there, but my contract went on until September. I signed with Jack Kent Cooke and the Lakers. I had to end up sending $10,000 down to these owners at San Diego. For two and a half months while I was working for the Lakers, I was giving the original owners money that I was making.

Lage: Crazy!

Newell: Yes. But what kind of bothered me about it was that these guys didn't do a damn thing, these 5 percent and 2 percent and all these other short percentage owners. They came out of it smelling like a rose. I never got a bonus. All they did was take away money that legally they owed me.

Lage: It is an amazing concept, that you put up the money, and then if it quadruples because someone else has done good work--

Newell: Yes, that's exactly right. But as Jack Kent Cooke says, he says, "Peter, you'll find gratitude under G in the dictionary." [laughter]

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X BIG MAN CAMP

[Tape interruption. Phone call about Big Man Camp leads to the following discussion.]##

Doing Things for the Right Reason

Newell: Really last year, Big Man Camp just turned out so great. We had about 2,000 a day to watch the practices, and the word got out in the NBA, and now I'm getting some teams sending four players that never sent anybody before.

Lage: So the teams send the players to Big Man Camp?

Newell: Yes, the teams usually send them. Sometimes the players pay the costs themselves. The agents want the players to pay, especially if they are in the last part of a contract, because they don't want to be beholden to the team, have any kind of a reason for them to say, "Hey, we did this or that for you."

But it's amazing. You know, it's a funny thing, Ann. In life, you do things for the right reason. When I started this Big Man Camp, I never accepted money. I did it just to help some players, and money was never even thought of. Then as it got a little bigger, we would be kind of gypsies. I would get guys to lend me their gym, and we'd sneak in early in the morning before, say, the NBA teams were using the gym. We started at Loyola, the old Loyola gym--we'd get there at maybe eight in the morning, or maybe even seven-thirty. They'd come in at nine, so we'd get an hour and half before.

Lage: That's the way it started?

Newell: Yes, that's the way it started, a do-it-yourself thing. One time, we came into the gym, and they had a piano out there on the tarpaulin; they had a dance the night before or something like that. [laughter] So we're all pushing the piano off, and we're rolling up the tarp and sweeping all of the dirt off the floor. We're pushing, and I remember Kiki said, "I thought we were coming here for basketball." I said, "Well, this is our strength program." [laughter] That's the way it was.

But you did it for the right reason, and I never charged. All I asked was $200 from the team for every player they sent, to the Loyola University basketball program, because they didn't have much going for them. Paul Westhead, I think, was the coach then. It was just kind of a token, but it was more than a drop in the bucket to them, because it was kind of like found money. The teams would always do that, but there was no exchange between the teams and me or anything like that.

And I think because of that, the players recognized that I did it because I was trying to help them. In fact, that car out there is one they gave me, I told you. I would try to make them understand, too, that there's a hell of a lot more to life than just money and measuring things in dollars, and that you don't do things necessarily for money, but you do them for the right reason. So the thing just kind of mushroomed.

Then when I turned it over to Kermit [Washington] and Stu Lantz--Stu does the color for the Lakers, and he was the guard I told you about; he was one of my players at San Diego, so we go way back. In fact, I traded for him when I was with the Lakers. He was a very, very good guard in the NBA. But I told them, "You charge, because there's going to be more costs," and there are so many more costs. Insurance, and facilities, and trainer, and conditioning coach--

Lage: Yes, so it's much more formal now.

Newell: Yes, so they do charge. They charge about $2,500 now a player, which is kind of a drop in the bucket.

Lage: For people who are making the kind of money the players make.

Newell: Well, that's right. Dave Cowens has a camp, he charges $10,000 a person. I still don't participate in the money, and I don't want to. I make sure that I stated that, because I feel that if I ever did, I wouldn't feel right, number one. Number two, I feel that one of the reasons the players respond as well as they do is because they know I'm there to help them, I'm not there for money. But it goes back to the original thing, you do things for the right

reason, to help the players. You're trying to help them; maybe you do and maybe you don't, but you're trying to.

But the thing has just gotten bigger and bigger and bigger, and just between you and me, I had an offer to go to a foreign country for $20,000 for one week, to have a Big Man Camp in that country. For one week! Twenty thousand dollars. That's more than I made in the first five years I coached.

Lage: So are you going to do it?

Newell: I don't know. It's a long, long way away. I'm thinking about it.

Lage: Do you want to say what country it is, just for the record?

Newell: Not right now, no. Later I'll tell you, but right now I wouldn't. An agent that has players over in this country is the one that proposed it, and I gave him a figure that I thought would discourage him completely, because I really didn't feel I wanted to go. The guy didn't blink an eye, and he said, "Oh, I think they'll do that." This country is very affluent right now.

The problem is, I'm afraid they're going to say yes. I thought the price was way out, especially when I've been doing this for nineteen years for nothing.

Lage: So you do this to help the players, but there must be some satisfaction--

Newell: Oh, there's tremendous satisfaction for me.

Lage: Tell me more about your satisfaction.

Newell: Well, the satisfaction I get from it is a Kermit Washington, a Wayne Cooper. These players have had good, long careers in the NBA. They've made good money and they've saved it, and they're productive people. You feel that maybe you've helped them attain this. Now, for instance, Kermit is in business up in Portland doing real well. Of course, I turned the camp over, as I said before, to him and Stu. He is doing very, very well. He tells anybody who will listen that it goes back to our relationship.

Lage: And that was the beginning of your training the big men.

Newell: He was the first one I started with, yes, and he was the first player I tried to help. Then I had Kiki Vandeweghe; they were the first two players. But the satisfaction I get is to see these players go along in their career. Even today, Shaq [Shaquille O'Neal] credits the camp with helping him and giving his

game more of a base. You feed your ego, but it's worthwhile that you're doing something to help somebody else. You're not doing it for money. Sure, I love to teach, I love basketball, I love to teach basketball, especially to receptive people. And it gives you that satisfaction of knowing what you do, you do well. God gave me a gift for doing this, teaching, and relating to players. I thank Him for that, because I don't know what I would have done in life if it hadn't been for that.

And I think it is a gift. I always was able to get players to play and to understand what I wanted them to do, and the ability to understand the game.

Lage: Do you work on that at Big Man Camp, understanding the game, too?

Newell: Yes, that's one of the things I really, really try to make them understand that if they can just add their intellectual capacity to the physicality that they have, their great physical gifts, how much better players they'll be, if they just try and understand what the game's all about. It's a game of counters, it's a game of read and react.

Lage: So the same kinds of things you did with the college players.

Newell: Absolutely the same.

NBA Basketball Today--A Dull Game

Lage: Even though the game is different?

Newell: The game itself is not that different in terms of the fundamentals. But the play of the game--yes, it is different. They always kind of condition the way the change of the game goes. But the NBA, in some ways, it's been very frustrating, because in my mind, the commissioner's office doesn't really understand the game of basketball--that the game of basketball is a game that needs a real fine balance. Every now and then, the coaches catch up with something, and they create an imbalance. As a result, the game has to be adjusted. You have to make some kind of a change.

Lage: You mean rule changes?

Newell: New rules, changes, you have to recognize what this imbalance is and why it occurs and do something about it when it does occur.

Lage: Give me an example. Is there something now that is out of balance?

Newell: Yes, there's something definitely now. The NBA game today is a very dull game. It's a very dull game. Everybody's playing the same defense for the same reason. They're responding offensively practically the same, and there's a lot of contingent aspects here. One of them is the coaches. Many, many of the coaches today in basketball, college and high school, and to an extent in the NBA, are products of what we call motion offense and flex offense. Those offenses are contrary to the development of a post offense.

Lage: Post?

Newell: Yes, a post-up center type of offense. The reason for that is the spacing of the players is totally different. In a post offense, you try to use the extremities of your court, the sidelines, and spread the defense laterally. In motion and flex, you jam, you congest your offense in the vicinity of the basket and create a shot coming away from the basket. Well, that motion and flex kind of an offense has so many defensive men in the vicinity of the basket, in the paint as they call it, that when you throw the ball to the center, he has no place really to develop a power game, a hook, because wherever he steps, there are people. So all he does is turn around and jump shoot.

But more than anything it takes the skill of passing away from the center. The centers in motion offense are very seldom called upon to make the kind of passes that a center has to make in the NBA. Of course, all this is part of the reason for my Big Man Camp, to try to help them make this transition from this kind of an offense to a more spaced-out offense, which they use in the NBA.

Lage: Oh, so the college tends to congregate them around the basket--

Newell: Oh, absolutely.

Lage: But the NBA spreads them out?

Newell: Well, most of these college coaches have come from those programs where they were never taught post play. So now that their post men are being challenged with this double-down defense that you see and you hear about, they don't know what to do, because they don't have a background of having been taught by their coaches. Their college coaches were motion coaches, so they don't have a good grasp of how to counter the double-down defense.

It's a game of counters, basketball. You play me a certain way, you're going to take something away from me, but you've got to give me something. And this is where that intellect thing comes in. It's up to me to read what you're taking away and to react to what you're giving me. It's about as simple as I can make the game of basketball. It's as much of a truism as there is in the game.

Lage: You teach things like this to the individual players, but you'd think that would be the coach's job, to get his team as a group to learn those things.

Newell: Well, you see, now go back to another thing. The problem goes right back to what I'm talking about, the background of many of these coaches, and their college and high school experience that came out of these programs. Motion, flex, and this triangle offense are very, very difficult offenses to break down into part-method teaching. When I was coaching at Cal, reverse action was our basic offense. But everything I did, I part-method taught. You see, teaching basketball and coaching basketball are two different things. Coaching basketball is five people, the team. That's coaching. That's the tactics, the strategy, the five-man motion. Teaching is when you break it down to a one-one, two-two, three-three, four-four, and the integral parts or the component parts of the five player offensive play. So that's when you teach. You don't teach five-man basketball, you coach that, but you do teach the separate component parts.

Lage: So you're doing the teaching at the Big Man Camps.

Newell: Yes, but what I'm trying to say is, these coaches that are the products of motion were not that exposed to teaching the breakdown of the separate component parts. So they don't break down things, even though they may not play motion. They don't use the part-method to break their sets down. Now, the one team that does is the Chicago Bulls. They have the best spacing, they have the best teaching and the best breakdown. Tex Winter is the offensive coach and Johnny Bach is the defensive coach. Tex Winter, I hired him in the NBA at San Diego when Hannum left. He was my ball boy when I was coaching freshmen at Loyola University. He was at Huntington Park, we practiced at Huntington Park. He went to Huntington Park High School. So I go way, way back with Tex.

Johnny Bach I've known for years. I got Johnny Bach the Warriors job with Al Attles, and then he later became the head coach. When they sold the team, he ended up with Chicago. Johnny is the defensive coach there. I think among most basketball people, if not all of them, the best-coached team in the NBA every year is Chicago. The head coach, he does what he does, and has no ego that gets in his way, and he lets these assistants do what they're so good at. So it's a very, very good organizational setup that

they have. It's just unusual, because the head coach is a strong person, and he doesn't have an ego that shuts off his assistants, which a lot of them do. Many coaches have good assistants, but they won't give them much input. But Phil Jackson does what he does so well, and that is handle the players. In a situation like [Scottie] Pippen not going into the game, he handled things like that, and he was firm. [Refers to May 1994 incident where Chicago Bulls player Scottie Pippen refused to enter the game when ordered in by his coach.]

I have a lot of respect for that program. I think it's an ideal coaching situation for any NBA team to look at and learn from. And if you watch them play, they've got the best spacing, and spacing means dispersing the offense all over the court rather than having them all congested in one area.

Lage: We started this by your saying that the NBA commissioner doesn't understand. What could be done?

Newell: Let me explain now. They know the game is a dull game. They have to know it, because there's been so much writing, so much indication. Figure that in a forty-eight-minute game in the NBA they're only scoring seventy-some points. Transpose that into a college game, which is only forty minutes. But it even goes farther than that, Ann. When you go to a college game it is only a forty-minute game. And in the college forty-minute game, not as many points are scored from the foul line.

Now let me explain what the NBA has facing them in this dull game. They have to examine the 24-second clock, and let me explain why. Coaches always catch up with rules. You've heard me say that umpteen times. And they've caught up with the 24-second rule on defense. They've caught up with it this way: they go out and they play the ball in the back court. The defensive scheme is to try to make them take eight seconds to get the ball over the middle line. Great if you can make it ten, but just say eight seconds. But stay with the pressure. You don't want to over-gamble, but just put a pressure and try to delay as long as you can the opponent getting into their set offense spacing. So that's another eight seconds.

So now sixteen seconds are off the clock. Now you play behind the center, which invites a pass in there. So now maybe with seventeen seconds, they throw the ball into the center. Now the center has the defensive center behind him, and he's in a very enviable spot, but now a second defensive man double teams him. So the man playing behind him plays on one side, the second defensive man plays him on the other side; they double team the offensive center.

So now, he's low, he's got a low post, which they've allowed him to have--

Lage: Does low post mean right under the basket?

Newell: Yes, kind of an enticing position, but if he holds the ball two seconds, the second man is on him. Now, he's got a double team on him, and he's low and he doesn't have good passing angles, and the distances are long to throw it out to the outside men, who are spaced out there at the three-point line. But now he finally does pass the ball outside.

Now the ball is thrown outside to a teammate, and now there are maybe three seconds to go on the clock. So what's going to happen? He's going to shoot that ball. Now, this is repeated over and over and over.

Lage: That's right, it's a pattern.

Newell: Yes. So what has happened is it's just a dull game. It's pressuring the ball. So what is the answer to that? Well, the answer is to make it a 30-second clock. Because now the ball comes out, instead of having four seconds, you've got ten seconds. Now he's got a lot of options. He's got a pass here, a pass there. The center can go back into a higher position. The guy comes out to guard him, bang, the double team guy comes out, now the offensive man throws it right back to the center.

Another solution I have advocated is not to start the shot clock until the ball is brought up over the midline. That would also give the game those extra seconds.

Lage: So this would create more variety in plays?

Newell: Yes, it gives them more options on the offense, and with that, he would have a chance to use different sets. But they're being trapped into throwing the ball into the center because the man's behind him, which is a terrible defensive position. I was just telling Stu, "I'm going to show my centers this year--" I've never done this before "I'm going to show my centers in the various post positions how you beat this kind of a defense," and all the options that you have, regardless of who comes down to double you."

Lage: Well, maybe that will help open up the game.

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Newell: You see the coaches today have so little experience in post play. In the old days, that wouldn't have been that much of a problem, I don't think.

Lage: To come up with how to beat it?

Newell: How to beat it. Because you played post, and they played you every way. But now, the coaches, after many years of the 24-second clock, have found out how to take advantage of it. There are more good centers in the NBA today than there ever have been. So more offenses are going to the center.

Now, Chicago isn't affected by this kind of stuff, because their spacing is different, their sets are different. If it was, both those coaches would know how to counter, because they've played post offense. In fact, they call it the triple post offense, the Chicago offense.

Lage: What are you going to teach your centers about how to counter it?

Newell: I'm just going to show them the three ways, the three responses, against this kind of defense. It's so simple. I'll put the players out there, and we'll go through it. I just don't talk about it. I put them physically in everything. I'll give them three moves that they can use in this situation, and I'll take them into low post, which is different than your response to the high post. And then a medium post. But I want them to understand the problem. They go back, and maybe they can talk to their coaches or maybe not. But I want them to understand there's a way to beat this, particularly Shaquille, because he's getting a double- and triple-team all the time. But to me, it's really kind of elementary.

So I'm not going to go out and preach to any coach and say, "You've got to do this," but I'm going to show my players. They will see the reasoning, especially Shaquille. You work with Shaquille and you show him something, like I taught him the spin move. This year, he uses that spin move, and he should have won the scoring title. That Clipper team just let Robinson of San Antonio score seventy-one points the last game to beat him.

Lage: So Shaquille's a quick learner? He responds?

Newell: Absolutely. And especially anything that makes sense. You can't snow him or anything like that. He's a bright young man. You talk logic to him, he's right with you, he understands.

How the Big Man Camp Got Started

Lage: How did you happen to focus on big men? Couldn't you have just as easily have worked with guards?

Newell: It was Kermit. Kermit is the one that really made the camp popular, because what happened was Kermit came to me and asked me to help him.

Lage: This was while you were with the Lakers?

Newell: I had already retired, but I was still with them. I was going to stay over and phase in Jerry West and help Bill Sharman, who was the new general manager. He was replacing me. Jack asked me to stay over until the start of the season. I never had done this before, although one year at San Diego when we didn't have a coach in the off-season, I worked with Rudy Tomjanovich and Stu Lantz and some of the players I had at San Diego that summer, just to help them on a couple of things. But that was all I did there. I always felt that, as a general manager, I was encroaching upon the coaching if I started to involve myself with working with the players in the summer. If they had asked me, I probably would have done it, but nobody ever asked me so I never did.

That is kind of a funny thing in the NBA. I'd been on the Olympic Committee for sixteen years. I'd been on practically every committee when I was in college ball. And I had a lot to do with experimentation of the game, from almost the time I started coaching. I had been in the NBA on and off since--well, practically every year but one year since 1968, and I've never, ever once been asked to serve on any kind of a technical committee. It's amazing.

Lage: It is amazing.

Newell: Well, it's just that--

Lage: They don't want too many ideas?

Newell: That's exactly right. The old story, if it isn't broken, don't fix it. But then it gets broken beyond repair. That's the other side of that coin.

Lage: So tell me about how Big Man Camp got going.

Newell: Helping Kermit, and Kermit had been a center in college. He was only about six-eight. He wasn't big enough to be a center in the NBA, so he had to be a power forward, which meant he had to learn to play facing the basket. So

I started to teach him to think facing the basket. He didn't have much of a shot.

Lage: He was aware that he had these things to learn?

Newell: Oh, yes, he came to me and asked me if I would help him, because I had told him when he was playing in the summer to try to get as much opportunity as he could to play outside facing the basket. But he didn't have the first clue of what to do with his feet, or how to play out there. He wasn't that secure playing that way, so he would always end up playing with his back to the basket. But I knew he had to be a power forward to have a long career.

So he came to me and asked if I'd help him. He'd come and pick me up about seven every morning and we'd go over to Loyola. I was just working his butt off, so he figured it out. He'll tell you. "Boy," he said, he'd come home, he'd say, "Pat, that man's a mean man. He's a mean man to me." But I was really working him, so he figured, "Well, I'm going to get the work load divided," so he came up with little Kiki, Kiki Vandeweghe.

Lage: What position was Kiki?

Newell: Kiki was a small forward. But he just was starting UCLA, and I'm not even sure he was on scholarship. He was from a private school.

Lage: Oh, he was a lot younger?

Newell: Oh, yes. He hadn't started college yet, but he was a champion swimmer, you know, when he was sixteen, and his father was a very famous professional player, Ernie Vandeweghe. He was a doctor. His mother was a Miss America, and they had an uncle, Mel Hutchins, who was an All-American at BYU. So he came from real good breeding, as we say in the horse business.

So anyway, I didn't know Kiki, but I knew his father quite well. So Kiki came, and then I had two of them working. Then pretty soon Donnie Ford showed up. Donnie was a kid I had drafted. He was about a fourth, fifth round draft choice that made it with the Lakers, a hard-working kid. He didn't have some of the natural talent that a lot of guys in the NBA had, but he worked like the devil, and he had a pretty good career. I guess he was about a fifth or sixth round [draft pick], something like that. Not too many fifth, sixth rounds make it in the NBA, but he did. And then the more we got, the better Kermit liked it, because he didn't have to work so hard. [laughter]

So then the next year, we got Kenny Carr, who was one of the top college players a couple of years before. He was with the Lakers now, so Kermit got Kenny, and then Jerome Whitehead, who was in and out of the NBA. He had been let go. He'd been drafted and let go, and then somebody would pick him up. He was really a good kid, and a hard-working kid, and a kid that ended up with a ten-year career and was at camp every year. Once he came to camp, he was there all the time. He was a kid that was limited, but what he could do, he did well. He was a center, and that helped, because we needed some big guys.

Lage: Was this a week, or was it longer?

Newell: No, maybe three times a week we'd go there for maybe a month. We didn't have any time thing like that, like we do now. It wasn't organized. One time we went there, we forgot the ball. Nobody had a ball. I had to have Florence come down and bring it from home. We'd sneaked into an El Camino Junior College court, conned the cop out there who wondered what we were doing there.

Lage: All these big tall guys!

Newell: Yes, he thought that we were prospects for their team or something. I forget what kind of a story I gave him. He took a look at them, and I guess he was an El Camino fan, so he let us stay there.

And it just grew. But Kermit in the meantime was improving and getting better, and finally made the All-Star game. Kermit let everybody within earshot know that the camp made him. So now we've got more interest, and more interest. Finally I had the camp at Dominguez High one year, after about six years, and I have eighteen guys out there. That's too many. At that time, I was doing everything by myself. I didn't have any assistants. Kermit was one of the players, and Stu teaches now. Stu takes half the players, and I take the other half.

Lage: Oh, I see, that's the way you can take--

Newell: That's the way we do it now. But then, Stu was a player, so I didn't have anybody, and Kermit was a player. I was doing it all myself. I'd have them down at each end. If I had them all at one end, they were waiting too long between times to do something.

So, that made me think, Well, I'm going to have to have two camps: one in the morning, one in the afternoon. That's what I did. I made them into two different camps. But then, I decided that--this is funny--that maybe I was getting too old to do it.

Lage: [laughs] How long ago was this?

Newell: About ten years ago. So I told Kermit and Stu that I would give them the camp, but I'd teach it the first year and then they could take over. Now Kermit is out, and he's helping me. So he brought Stu in, and Stu, I knew, was a good teacher. I had Stu there, and he was doing teaching down in San Diego, so it was an ideal thing. We had it up at Stanford then. We had a tremendous group that one year. We had Scottie Pippen and [Horace] Grant and [Charles] Oakley and [Chuck] Person and--gee, we had a bunch of great young players that year. I forget some of the others.

Then it got to be about twenty to twenty-four each year, but we would put half of them in the afternoon and half in the morning and bring them together maybe on a Thursday. Which I do now, but I bring them together now on a Wednesday. That's why I have to keep it now to twenty-four. I'm afraid right now we've got commitments from over twenty-four. Usually we don't know until August how many we're going to have, but it looks like we're pretty sure we're going to have too many. I think I have commitments from twenty-two right now, and half-commitments from another six or seven. So that's another problem I'm going to have.

Anyway, we moved to Stanford, and then every now and then I'd get some foreign players. They'd send a foreign player over. Then it started to get international recognition, because some of the players I had in that period were--well, Kiki, Bernard King, and Purvis Short, and I think those three of those players were among the five leading scorers in the NBA for a couple of years. They were right up there. I know one year they were in the first five. For three or four years, they were always in the first ten. Bernard was a phenomenal scorer, and all of them had tremendous talent. In fact, Bernard King had had kind of a checkered background because he had some problems at Utah, and Utah wanted to get rid of him. His agent, Bill Pollock, I knew through my son Tom. Bill Pollock called me and asked me if I would take him, and I said, "Well, I really don't know." I didn't know Bernard. Just from what I read, I thought, well, he could be a problem. But I didn't know, and I said, "Well, I'm pretty well loaded up." He said, "Well, I'll call you in a couple of weeks."

He called me in a couple of weeks and I said, "I don't know." Mack Calvin was a player with Utah, and that's where Bernard played. I put down the phone, and Mack Calvin happened to be in the Warrior office. I was with the Warriors then. I said, "You played with Bernard. Tell me, what kind of a person was he?" "Oh, he was a great guy. I was really surprised he had this problem, because you'd never know it." He never was out drinking with anybody, but he'd go in and he'd drink in his room, and he

became an alcoholic. He'd get in awful scrapes, awful trouble. His agent was able to get these things squared away for him.

Then when he told me that, I said, "Well, I'll think about it." So I told Bill, "I'd like to meet him. I'll meet you down in L.A." So I did. He brought him out, and he was playing in the summer league, and just an impeccably dressed kid, polite, nice. I was really taken by him, because he was a very articulate guy, too. He was just totally different than I imagined him. So I said, "Okay."

So I've got him. The second day at practice, I can't believe him. His work ethic is so great, he just set a tone for the camp. He had a lot to do with setting a work-ethic tone. He'd come out there, he'd get a game face on as soon as he would step on that court, and he'd just compete. He was talented and very amenable to any suggestion in his game, any correction, any thought of adding to his game. He had a great, quick kind of what I call a baby hook in the basket area that he could shoot over Kareem or any of those big guys. He shot it so quickly, and he had a great sense of when to let it go.

So I called Al Attles. I said, "You've got to get down here, you've got to see this kid. This guy is something." So Al came down that night to practice, and boy, he just shook his head. We talked after. I said, "You go back up, Al, and see if we can't get him loose from Utah." He did, and we got him loose. We made a deal. We had to give up Coop to do it, which we didn't want to do, but we had to do it.

So, the Warriors gave up Wayne Cooper, who I drafted, to get Bernard from Salt Lake, from Utah. And of course, he just turned our whole franchise around for a few years. Then we lost him, because his contract was up. Scotty Sterling, the general manager at the time, had an agreement with Bill Pollock on the extension of the contract, another three-year contract, and it was agreed upon. But Scotty couldn't get the okay. Franklin Mieuli was away at the time, and the lawyer, Luther Avery, wouldn't give the okay for the contract, so it ended up that the Knicks signed him, made a deal with us. They gave us some players, Sleepy Floyd I think was one of them, and I forget who else was.

We got some players, but when we lost Bernard, we lost the heart of the team. He had taken us right up from about twenty wins to about forty-eight.

Lage: What did he work on at your camp? The way you describe him, he really had the skills.

Newell: Well, he worked on his skills and understanding the game, the thing I talk about. And I encouraged him on his jump shot. He felt the camp helped him, the two-man game, screening on the ball and things like that, which we do a lot of. He came to camp every year. But it's funny, these are all forwards, these are small men. We keep saying the big man camp.

But as time went on, it seemed like we'd get more and more big centers. So the fact that we had so many guys that were scoring now in the top, although most of them were forwards, gave the camp more credibility. And then as time went on, time does that, it gives you credibility. Over the years, we've had--I'll give you a list of the players--

Lage: Yes, I'd like that. [see Appendix]

Newell: I think we had about ninety players in the NBA this year that have been to camp at one time or another, playing right now.

Work Ethic and the Lessons of Camp

Lage: Isn't that something? Do you ever have a problem with work ethic at the camp? You mentioned King had such a good work ethic.

Newell: Never, no. I never have. And the reason I don't is the players themselves, especially the players that have been there before. They set a tone that goes back to Kermit, and to King.

Lage: So they kind of know what they're getting into when they get there? They're ready to work?

Newell: Yes. And the players that have been there before help the players that haven't been there, because a lot of the things we do are the things they've never heard of before. Pivot feet, and everything I teach, I explain why, and why I think it's the best. If they've got a better way, just let me know, and we'll talk about it. If it's a better way, then I'll teach that way, if it's better. Not in a put-down way, but just that this is the best way I know. There may be a better way, but this is why I think it's the best. And that usually suffices, because you're not making them say, "That's the only way to do it," but it's the best way you know to do it.

Lage: Do you give any kind of lessons in life in the camp, or just by example?

Newell: Well, I do. Of giving, that you just don't take all your life, you give something back, give something back to the community, give something back to the game. People gave you their time and their effort to help get you here to this state. So you've got to learn to give, too. You just don't want to always take. I always try to make them understand that.

Lage: Are they receptive to that?

Newell: Oh, yes. I don't get up on a soap box or anything. I try to relate it to what they're doing. And some of the rules and lessons that they learn from what they're doing are the same rules and lessons you learn in life, or you should learn. So anyway, that's the camp. And then the camp, this last year we went to Hawaii.

Lage: And that worked? It didn't diminish the work ethic?

Newell: No. Actually, it may have even upped it, because there were so many people there, they felt conscious of an audience.

Lage: More observers, now?

Newell: Yes. I thought it would be just the opposite. I thought it may diminish, they'd be distracted. But when you really think about it, hell, they're not distracted by cameras, they're not distracted by people, they play in front of people and cameras and TV and all that all the time. The more I've thought of why, well, hell, that's the why. They're there to work, and the only problem I envisioned really was so many people in there, because we just had a few coaches before. We never publicized--we kept it as low profile. I wanted it that way. I'm always afraid that you oversell something, and the next thing you know, you're doing things for the wrong reasons. You start to get caught up in the publicity of it and all that. Like you say in basketball, let the game come to you, and that's about the way I felt about the camp. Just do it the way we were doing it.

But I like it over there in Hawaii, because I think that we can help the community, in terms of giving these young Hawaiian kids that come out to watch these practices to see these famous professionals the opportunity to see how they work at the game. They're making all this money in secured contracts, and they're still out there doing menial things, very, very menial things. The coaches love it because those are some of the things that they're trying to get their players to do, be it high school or even junior high school--

Lage: So the coaches will bring their local teams?

Newell: Well, they bring their teams, the kids show up, and the coaches show up. They may come as a group, or they may come individually. But I have so many people over there say, "I never dreamed that you could ever get those players to do the basic things like that," and with such a concentration, almost a commitment to doing them. I had Bernard one time repeat something about six times, seven times. He just didn't get it right. I used it as an example. But there was never any hint that I was doing it to punish him or anything. I never get on the players. I never make a player look bad. I would kid Cal players, but they knew me a lot better than these players know me. But I never would ever beat on a guy.

Lage: Demean them.

Newell: No. I'd never demean them. I'd kid them sometimes, but I'd never try to make them look bad. And I don't do that there, and they know that. So if I have them do something, repeat it, repeat it, repeat it, it's because I want them to get the technique right. I explained it to them, too, that if I had you repeat something maybe three, maybe twice, maybe five times, it isn't that I'm trying to put you down or anything, but we just want to get that technique right so you're comfortable.

Lage: They probably haven't had to do this for a while.

Newell: No, they haven't. Ever, some of them.

Lage: Have you had any problems with a bad reaction to that?

Newell: No. And you see, when a player has a little trouble, he gets in the line, one of the older players invariably will go over and kind of walk through the thing with him and explain the thing in his own way to him. This rubs off so that the players feel more comfortable. Some of the younger players, they're kind of awed by some of the older players, because we've had some of the great players at the camp, [Hakeem] Olajuwon, fellows like that, that are now superstars. And of course they weren't maybe when they started coming to camp, but they were number one draft choices and were the first draft pick.

It's really rewarding in terms of helping somebody do something, and then the manifestation of it is seeing them rise. Not that you're responsible for it, but as I said, you've helped them.

Lage: You've contributed.

Newell: Yes. It's just like these women that I teach for the Olympic Committee, to see some of these gals in their college career doing real well. Lisa Leslie was

the player of the year this year. I didn't make Lisa Leslie; she's a tremendous talent, but I think we helped her understand that she had this great talent, and we helped her develop a technique to her game and understand the game better. I think she would tell you that.

Lage: I can see how rewarding it would be.

Newell: Oh, yes. And there's nothing more rewarding when you've done something for the right reason, and you see, as I say, a manifestation of the thing happening the way you'd like it to happen. [tape interruption]

The Camp in Hawaii: More Spectators, More Promotion

Lage: We were talking about Big Man Camp. How did you happen to move it to Hawaii?

Newell: Yes. I know a little about Kalani [High School, Honolulu] because Merv Lopes, my friend over there, used to coach there. So I thought, Well, we'll go there. We had a chance to go to the university, but the university was doing a lot of renovating, and it is hard to find parking and all that. So we went to Kalani last year. We never had any numbers of people at camp, as I said before, watching it. We'd always have anywhere from fifty people, sometimes more, but most of the time less, before Honolulu.

But we got publicity in Hawaii you couldn't believe from the TV every night about the camp, about these players, Shaquille, and Manning, and Shawn Kemp and all. Then the night before, they suggested to the fans they'd better get there early the next morning, because if they don't, they won't get a seat, because it will be filled, and it only holds 2,000. When I got there, they hadn't opened the door yet. There were sleeping bags by the door. Some people came there and slept all night by the door, and around the gym.

Lage: What an event!

Newell: And a serpentine up, oh, as far as you could see, about eight across. We never had so many people as I had the morning and afternoon first two days. So I let a lot of the people sit right on the floor under one basket and just worked at the other end. The only thing that I was concerned with, really worried about, was the noise, but the people were just great. The kids were quiet, they minded, and they really, truly enjoyed it.

I wanted to do it for a lot of reasons. One was that it was something that they could see for nothing. They could never see these players, probably. Their parents couldn't afford to take them to see the Lakers or anything like that, because it was too expensive. And also to let these young people see the work ethic of these players, and the discipline that they have, and how they take to coaching and teaching. They listen and they're committed. And the players responded great. They totally absorbed the camp itself. They weren't doing anything on purpose out there to excite the people or doing anything like that. Naturally, a lot of times they did, with these thunderous dunks that Shaquille has, he did.

It really worked. It really seemed to be a great marriage. They were so cooperative, the high school people. I was disturbed with some of the results because in the past we had never sold T-shirts or pictures or anything. But that year we had a guy that was supposed to be in charge of the T-shirts. One of the reasons I allowed it was because we were going to give 50 percent of the net to Kalani High School. But Kalani never got anything last year, which we're changing now.

Lage: They didn't get the 50 percent you'd intended?

Newell: No, they never did. The guy said he didn't make any money. Well, they were selling those shirts. And then the photography, the same thing. This guy was supposed to be the photographer, and we never even got a picture out of him. He was selling them for $15 to these people, and we never even got a picture. To this day we haven't got a picture from him, which really burns me, because that's a lot of money. But he was supposed to give I don't know how much, because Kermit would take care of all these things. But he was supposed to give, say, 50 percent of what he made. And hell, he just disappeared on us.

So this year, we learned, and Kermit says the same thing I say. We're basketball people; we didn't really know that end of it, and we're more concerned with the basketball, and we kind of trusted these people. Now we've got the thing a lot tighter; I've got two people over there. One is really versed in marketing and promotion and that, and the other is a former coach. I brought him in at the last minute because things were in such a shambles last year. He put the party together; we had a great luau party that he arranged for nothing. He got hotels, the food, he got this millionaire, multi-millionaire guy I guess, has a $48-million home right on the water near that hotel out there, Wai Alai. We had just a wonderful--he got the entertainment, he got hula girls, he got the Hawaiian band members and all that. I think everybody contributed their time for nothing. So it worked out real good.

Last year, we were involved with an arm of the governor. The idea of going to Hawaii came from a fellow, a good friend of mine, Gordon Sakamoto, who worked for the governor in tourist promotion. He's the one that hit me and brought it up. I said, "I'm not sure I want to do that. It's too much expense for the teams, and I don't want to have them incur any more expense. Hotels and all."

He said, "Well, we can help. We could work out something with the hotels and that." So the more I thought about it, the more I thought, Well, that's maybe a good idea. So I talked with Kermit, and Kermit had already talked to somebody else. He was all for it. He thought it would be great.

Well, we just underestimated everything, because we had always been so low-key. I had no idea that there would be over fifty people there watching it. I really didn't. I underestimated maybe Shaquille's drawing power.

Lage: You've had drawing power before.

Newell: Yes, I had him the year before.

Lage: Where was it the year before, Stanford?

Newell: No. The year before it was at Saint Bernard's High School in Del Rey, a little old gym, and there weren't fifty people. I had Shaquille, and I had this kid that played for Denver, he was a rookie then, that was doing so well and playoffs, LaFonzo Ellis. Had a lot of local players.

But I got disturbed by some of the promoting and self-promoting that went on in Hawaii. They have a fellow that's very much of a self-promoter, a good-looking Hawaiian guy that went to one of the Ivy League schools, and he got hit with an Ivy League book and he never forgot it, I guess. He's just a pain in the neck in terms of self-promoting. I don't want the camp to promote me, I don't want it to promote Kermit, I don't want it to promote anybody. I want the camp to stand by itself, and I don't want to use it as any kind of a vehicle for my own self-aggrandizement, and I don't want other people to either. This guy, he's just a politician. Gordon Sakamoto worked for him, and then he left, and he went back to United Press.

But I didn't want the teams to have to pay any more money when we moved the camp to Hawaii. We didn't get free hotels here, but by getting a travel agency to contribute for our hotels over there, it would take away some of the expense of the travel. I was trying to get travel, and we did, we got the Hawaiian Airlines to give us the travel. So between the two of them, it didn't cost the teams as much money as if they were here.

This year it was the same thing; our prime sponsor is going to be two of the travel agencies over there.

Lage: So they see it as a tourist promotion?

Newell: All they want from us really is that we put aside I don't know how many seats, fifty, one hundred, whatever. It doesn't make any difference; we'll put them aside. They can advertise on their tour package choice seats at the Big Man Camp, and they feel it will be a real extra to offer the tourists. This is something with all these name players, and they can promote them. And at the same time, they'll get a step on the other competing travel agencies, because we have players from all different parts of the country, all different teams.

Lage: It's a great idea.

Newell: Yes. It was really, really successful, so we're going to do it again, and if it works out this year, we may work into some kind of a contract with this travel agency and make it a permanent thing. The proceeds from T-shirts and the photography, other than for expenses, will go to Kalani High School and a scholarship in the name of the Big Man Camp, which really is right down my alley. That sounds great. That's really what I want, to give something back to them.

And their cooperation and reception of the whole thing was such that I'd like to see the camp there, because the players really liked it. We work hard, but they have a lot of time off, and they bring their wives, most of them. They have enough time to go see things, go to Waikiki, whatever they want to do, or go on excursions. This year, the thing is so popular in terms of the players, word of mouth, I don't know how many players are coming.

Even Shaquille. I saw him in Orlando, when I was there to see a game. He sees me and he comes on over, and I haven't seen him since last summer. We shake hands and all that. He said, "When's camp, Coach?" I said such-and-such. "Now, count me in, I'll be there." I said, "Shaquille, you've got to talk to your agent." "Coach, I'll be there. I'll be there. Count me in, now."

So I called his agent, Leonard Armato. I said, "Hey, Leonard, I don't want you to think I'm pushing Shaquille on anything for the camp." Because I really didn't expect him to come; I figured he'd be too busy. I said, "This is what Shaquille said." He said, "Well, if he said that, that's the way it is."

Lage: Why did he have to talk to his agent about something like that?

Newell: Well, his agent is the one who makes the schedule for him. He may have committed him to something in that period. That's always the way. It's just kind of protocol, too. You try to operate with the player, you can do that and ignore the agent, but it's not wise. Because the agent, he wants to be advised--

Lage: He schedules promotional things and--

Newell: Yes. And that's why I always make sure the agent is aware of it, and I always make sure, too, that the agent and player know that if the schedule doesn't allow it, I don't feel hurt at all. I understand that. And I really didn't anticipate Shaquille's coming to camp, because he was so successful this year, and he's got so many things going on.

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XI LOS ANGELES LAKERS YEARS, 1972-1976

Lakers' Owner Jack Kent Cooke

Lage: Now, let's go to the Lakers.

Newell: You remember that I was a consultant for Houston and they had just a myriad of problems. I'm sure I helped them out of some of them, but God himself couldn't help them out of the others. They did survive, but we had some problems with some of the black players, because the cultural-racial change from San Diego to Houston was difficult. Some of them were in mixed marriages, and that wasn't very popular at that time in Texas and Houston. We got over that, but it was a disquieting thing. And there were so many things, having to make the change of all the personnel and all the adjustments and all the problems with the schedule; it was very, very difficult that first year.

Houston had a lot of part-owners, and about three-quarters of them dropped out the first year. They left this Wayne Duddleston, the main owner, kind of holding the sack in a sense. He tried to keep it going. He brought it there, but he reminded me somewhat of a coach of an expansion team. He can do a great job, bring a team into some semblance of order and all that, but he's not going to have a very good record because the players aren't that good. So he does this for two years, builds a great base, but he hasn't got a winning record so he gets fired. Some guy that's half the coach comes in and now reaps the benefit from him, because now he's got the base and he's got the players. But the first coach's record in trying to do the things the right way was not too good, and he gets fired.

So I didn't know again what I was going to do, but I wasn't going to stay there. I kept my residence in San Diego. Fred Schaus was then general manager of the L.A. Lakers, and actually he was the coach of Jerry West

[University of West Virginia]. We'd known each other as coaching rivals. In fact, we met in the finals of the NCAA in 1959, and we were good friends. Fred had made up his mind he was going to go back to college coaching. He was offered the Purdue job. His good friend George King was the athletic director and invited him to be the coach, and he wanted to go back to college coaching.

He called me in, and I was in San Diego at the time, he said, "Pete, come on down. I want to talk to you about the Laker job." Well, I didn't even know the job was open at the time. He told me about what his plans were and that he was going to recommend me to Jack Kent Cooke, the Lakers' owner, to succeed him, which I appreciated and thought was really nice. I had heard a lot about Jack Kent Cooke, and I really didn't know him, but there were a lot of horror stories, and I wasn't sure that that was the place I wanted to be.

But anyway, I met with Schaus for about three hours in L.A., and he told me all about Jack and the franchise and all. They had just won the championship. But [laughing] he neglected to tell me one thing; about the tremendous cleavage there was between the team, some of the team members, and Jack.

Lage: So he didn't fill you in on some of the subtleties.

Newell: Well, that one thing, yes. He didn't dwell on that too long, but it wouldn't have made any difference anyway.

Lage: How important to you as general manager is the owner and the qualities of the owner?

Newell: Oh, the general manager has to have an owner that he has respect for and that he feels he can work with. I respected Jack, I understood where Jack came from.

Lage: Where did he come from?

Newell: Where did Jack Kent Cooke come from? He was very pragmatic and he was very bright, one of the brightest men I've ever met. And that includes so many of those men at Berkeley. He had and has a tremendous mind. He's probably the most articulate man I've ever spoken to or heard speak. He could have been a Shakespearean actor. His enunciation, his diction, his choice of words is--I swear to God, he must have memorized the dictionary. He was very proud of this, and he was very prone to let you know when you misused a word.

In fact, this is one of the great stories of Jack Kent Cooke: we had a player who was scared to death of Jack Kent Cooke. He had a young lawyer who was a very successful agent. And because he was successful, he had a little better opinion of his ability and knowledge and background maybe than he should have been. He kept hounding me about redoing this guy's contract. I said, "There's no way. Jack just doesn't do that. When you make a deal, you make a deal." Jack was that way. If you made a deal with him, he'd hold up to it, but he expected you to also. He didn't want you to come in two months later and say, "I want to have this thing reworked." He'd get very upset at something like that. A deal's a deal.

Well, this guy keeps on. I said, "Look, there's just no way." He said, "Let me speak to him." I said, "Well, you don't really want to speak to him." "Yes, I want to speak to him. He's not the only man with money. I'm not sure I can't match him with money." I said, "Well, don't bet on it." [laughter] I said, "That's not the point. Jack has got a firm idea of how he wants to run this club, and number one is he doesn't renegotiate contracts. I'll tell you that right now."

So I told Jack, I said, "Jack, this guy is--you know, you could really do me a favor. Let me bring this guy in. He's really one of those real Eastern guys, finger-snapping, and he thinks we're all dudes out here in the West, kind of a thing. I'd love to see him come in and joust with you." "Peter, let's bring him in."

So I called the guy and I said, "Come on tomorrow, come on in. Ten o'clock, and bring Happy with you." Happy was the guy, the player. So boy, he comes in, cocky as the devil. Well, Jack, his desk was on a rise about that high, and he swiveled his chair up so he was really kind of looking right down on him. I'm sitting in a chair over here, and he's here looking down. This player is scared to death. It's almost like he was on death row. He doesn't want any more to be in that room.

Lage: Is that why you had him bring the player?

Newell: Oh, yes. Jack wanted him to bring the player, too. He called him Harold, I think. "Harold, now what is it that you're unhappy about, Harold? Didn't you sign a contract?" "Yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir." And, "I don't understand this. I don't just understand."

Well, then this guy breaks in, this lawyer. He starts on some kind of oration. When he finishes, Jack says, "Young man, did you attend college?" "Yes, I went to Michigan State, got my law degree." "Oh. Well, I knew you didn't major in English, because the manner in which you spoke and the way in which you said what you said would indicate that it would do well for you

to take some courses in English." [laughter] And boy, the guy just kind of shriveled. Jack just took over. I tell you, I've never seen a fight on television that was as one-sided as that thing was. And I want to tell you, that player was so happy to get out of there, I think he'd have taken half his salary. [laughter] He says to me, "Peter, I don't think we'll see that duo again." [laughter]

Lage: Was Jack British or Canadian?

Newell: No, he was Australian. And then he came to Canada, sold dictionaries, you know. The man was amazing. He played, I think, a saxophone in some of the popular bands at the time. He was actually a band member. Self-educated, and bright as a new penny. He was so organized, and his mind was so active in terms of being on top of everything.

Lage: Did he understand basketball?

Newell: I'll tell you, he did probably as much or more than any of the other owners. He made it a point to know as much as he could about anything he was involved with.

Lage: Did he try to pick your brain, did you feel, or--?

Newell: Oh, yes. And he'd want to listen too. One time I just felt--the coach was a great guy, Bill Sharman, and his assistants, but they weren't playing a player that we had drafted, and a player that we thought was part of our future. His minutes were not too many. We were playing some guys that were not productive. We had some kids, the younger players, that had a potential for development.

So I went to work, and I really went into a study of our whole team in terms of productivity, in terms of the important things, what their shooting percentage was, how many times they went to the foul line, turnovers, assists, rebounds, offensive and defensive rebounds--all the offensive statistics that you can come up with. And I applied it to all these players. I spent a lot of time putting it together.

And then I asked Jack, I said, "Jack, I want you to come in. I want to have the coaches in here," and I even had Chick Hearn and his assistant in. I said, "I want to go over these players, and I want to have the coaches give us reasons why some players are playing as many minutes as they are and others aren't, because I'm a little confused by it. I know you are also, because you've mentioned it to me, and I think that in fairness to them, we ought to make them aware of these statistics that I put together, and just have their opinions on them."

So we did that, and Jack participated.

Lage: How were the coaches?

Newell: Well, the coaches were fine. Jack asked questions, why is this and why is that, and I would explain. The coaches, or the one assistant coach and the head coach, they explained, but they couldn't answer some of the questions why some fellow would be shooting 32 or 34 percent, and a fellow that was shooting 45, 46 percent was only getting half the minutes. The rebounds and things like that. But it was a kind of illuminating thing, and Jack appreciated it, and he told me. He liked things like that. He liked things that were factual, and he wanted answers to things, and he wanted them based on fact, not on presumption or things like that.

Lage: Is that one of the roles of the general manager? They seem to have such a broad role.

Newell: Well, it is a broad role, but that isn't really one of their jobs, but there are times when you have to do it. Sometimes coaches get too close to the trees to see the forest kind of a thing, or vice versa.

Lage: I see. So it's really the coach's role, but in this case--

Newell: It's the coach's role, yes, but there are times when you have to sit down and say, "God almighty, why isn't so-and-so playing?" Because the owner's asking you. You're kind of a conduit between the coach and the owner. So yes, that's part of it. You don't want to have to make the decision of firing somebody, so if you can do something to help him, to maybe turn something around, you do it, but you don't want to involve yourself too much. I was always conscious of that; I'm probably guilty of not being more involved that way if anything. I know I wasn't overly involved.

Owner-Player Tensions

Newell: But at the same time, I saw things--that year, I had a lot of things happen. In the four years I was at the Lakers, just in a broad way I'll explain it to you. They had won the championship the year before, just before I came there. Just about a week before I took over, two weeks, they had this victory party at the Forum. The same night, they had a prize fight in the arena. It was the victory party, for winning the championship. So Jack invited a lot of his Hollywood friends, and other friends there, and one of

them was Jim Murray, the famous writer, and his wife. I think her name was Florence.

Lage: The sports columnist.

Newell: Yes. It started with a battle that was going on between the players and Jack over who should pay the coach his share of the playoff. It had been policy that the team had paid the coaches their share. The NBA bylaws don't say anything about the coaches getting paid, but it does say the players participate and such-and-such. Keith Erickson was the player rep, and he was the one that was debating with Jack on this.

Some of the players were very upset. It wasn't the money. Jerry West, for example, is a very, very generous guy. It wasn't the money; it was the idea. Wilt Chamberlain is the same. For neither one of them was it a money problem, that it was money coming out of their pockets. It was just the idea that they felt that this was something that they'd earned. They had won a championship, and this money that was coming was due to them. It [the coach's share] was something that the club was expected to pay.

Lage: And what, traditionally, did other teams do?

Newell: That's the way it traditionally was done--the club paying for the coach, giving the coach an equal share.

Lage: So Jack was instituting something new?

Newell: Jack felt that these players made enough money, and that the pot was big enough to accommodate the coaches. That was the point. Jack was generous in a lot of ways, but he would be penny-pinching in others. And he held firm to that. I guess he felt he was being pushed more than he cared to be pushed, and he got very upset.

Lage: At this party?

Newell: Well, prior to the party, but this whole argument spilled over into the party. Wilt was upset. Wilt was upset with Jim Murray. Evidently Jim had written something that Wilt didn't like about him. Wilt comes on in, and Jack gets up from his table. "Wilt, I want you to meet my very good friend," and he goes on. Wilt walked right on by Jim. And here he's left out there, and the coach says, "Jack, that was sacrilegious." You just didn't do that.

I wasn't there, but I guess Jim was a little uncomfortable about it. But as a writer you're used to a guy getting upset at something, and Jim always

had these tongue-in-cheek columns where if a guy wanted to get upset, he could, but if he really thought about it, it was just a little fun.

Then the players were upset, so they go out and watch the fight. All of his friends and all the players are out watching the fight. Jerry West too--Jerry and Jack used to battle too.

Lage: Now, this fight was--

Newell: A professional fight. They used to have the fights there every week, and they had this professional fight out there, and they'd go out and watch it. So they were coming in and out between courses, and some of them hardly spent any time in there. And the party just went over like a lead balloon.

Jack was really embarrassed, with all of these celebrities there, and they were being ignored by these players. So Jack was really upset, and he was really mad at Keith Erickson, who was the player rep and a very, very good player. As soon as this was over, we traded him. Jack wanted him out of there; I had to trade him to Phoenix. I forget what we got, but he was so upset with him. But hell, he was just carrying the message.

Lage: So it sounds like Jack would be a little hard to work with.

Newell: Oh, he wasn't easy. God, no, he had fired more people over the years than any three owners.

Lage: Is that what Schaus didn't tell you?

Newell: Yes, about this party, which ended with everybody mad at everybody. The players mad at Jack, Jack mad at the players.

Lage: And so that's where you stepped in?

Newell: Yes, I come in, and I've got a hornet's nest. That was the start, but the next year, we go to the finals, and we get beat. My first year there, we get beat in the finals by the Knicks, and Jerry West got hurt, which really hurt our chances. I think we'd have won--not easily, but I think we definitely would have won. We were favored to win, and we really had the better team, but when Jerry got hurt, we just didn't have the player to replace him. But it was a very successful year, and the crowds were big, and we had the best record in the league.

Loss of Key Players

Newell: Then, the thing started to unravel, because the next year, Wilt and Jack got in a big to-do.

Lage: Was that over money?

Newell: Yes, over a contract. Bill [Sharman] and I disagreed on Wilt. Bill felt that Wilt's skills had been diminishing 10 to 15 percent each year. Which may have been true, but they could diminish for the next three years, and there wouldn't be many centers in the NBA that were even close to him, even with all the diminishing. And also I knew that it's very, very difficult to get a center. So I think Jack bought Bill's argument better than he bought mine, that it's very difficult to get a center, and especially one that could give you as much as Wilt. But Jack made the decision he wasn't going to sign Wilt then, so we lost Wilt.

Lage: And Jerry West left.

Newell: Well, what happened was, we made this trade, and we got Elmore Smith, but we had to give up Jimmy McMillan, who was this fine rookie they had the year before, a very, very good shooter and a good part of that team that won. We had to give him up, and a few other things, I forget what else we gave up, to get Elmore Smith, this young, promising center, that Bill liked a lot and felt that he would be a good replacement. He was a very good shot blocker. He just wasn't skilled in techniques enough to be a real top center, and never really had a work ethic to develop what he did have.

And to make matters worse, his wife was one of these religious zealots, and she was convincing him that it was against God's will to play a physical game. I had to call him in one day and say, "You better tell your wife that it isn't God's will necessarily that you're living like you're living, because you play basketball, that's your business. If physical contact is against your religion, then you're taking money under false pretenses, which seems to me to be a worse sin than that. So you tell your wife. But you tell your wife to take a good look around at what you have, where you're living, and think where she lived when she was being brought up, and what you're able to provide"--they had a kid or two--"your children, and your parents. Just take a look where you are now, where she was growing up and all. But this is your profession, this is how you make your living, and you don't want to take money under false pretenses, and that's what you're doing if you listen to her and don't listen to us."

Lage: Did it work?

Newell: He played better, but you're still fighting the thing. In fact, I remember Kermit's wife. Elmore's wife was always talking to other wives and converting them, or trying to. She was the one that converted David Meyers from Milwaukee. Remember the UCLA kid that went to Milwaukee? Well, he was one of the top draft choices, had a great couple of years, and finally just quit basketball. He was Anne Meyers' older brother. He went into this religion. He was a Catholic, brought up in Catholicism and a strong Catholic family, and he almost divorced himself from his family for a long time.

But that's what she started to do with Kermit's wife, who was a bright gal. Kermit told her about what I told him, "Hey, you take a look, if you want to live this way or you want to go the other way." Pat is her name. Pat's pretty smart. He said, "I don't want you around that woman."

Lage: She decided to take some other religion up?

Newell: Yes. But this gal would go out and really convert people. That religion where you go and knock at doors and all that.

Lage: Jehovah's Witnesses?

Newell: It is Jehovah's Witnesses, I think. Aren't they the ones that knock--? Yes. I think that's what it was. She was really, anybody going by, she was converting.

So anyway, we make the trade, and we lose Wilt, and we lose Jimmy, those two players. That team that won the championship really didn't have a good bench, deep bench, because they'd never been able to get good draft choices because they would have such winning records, and it just seemed that there weren't as many players coming out of college then as there are now. So they didn't really have a good bench.

But I was able to make some trades. There was one player, Jimmy Clemens, that they'd drafted the year before, and he was a good player from Ohio State, but he was more of a half-court player, and Bill liked to play the running game. So Bill asked me if I could make a trade for him. Well, I made a trade with Cleveland; I got two first-round draft choices down the road that really helped us. In fact, it was part of the reason we were able to make the Kareem trade later.

Then the next year, Jerry West left. Now you lost--Elgin Baylor was retired just before I got there. You lose Chamberlain, and now you lose West, and Erickson, and Pat Riley, who we had to trade. We really didn't have that many good players left. We had Gale Goodrich, who was really a

good player. And I drafted a good point guard by the name of Jimmy Price, who was a very fine rookie. But it was a totally different team.

A Turbulent Period: Illnesses of Coach Sharman and Jack Kent Cooke

Lage: Did you feel like you didn't have enough freedom to draft people?

Newell: No, there were other circumstances that all came up at the same time. Bill Sharman--who had married his second wife, a girl by the name of Dorothy, just a wonderful girl and a great, great help to him--Bill started to lose his voice. He got to the point where he was just [whispers] raspy; it was all he could do. Jack sent him to Hawaii, one of those islands there where there was nobody, just Dorothy and him, and Dorothy would take all the messages on the phone; he was not supposed to talk, and he didn't. His vocal cords were ulcerated because he never spoke from his diaphragm. He spoke right from his throat. It put such a strain on his vocal cords that they ulcerated, and the only cure for it is rest.

Jack sent him to a lot of doctors. See, that way, Jack was very good. Very, very good. But rest was the one thing they all seemed to agree on. So Jack sent him to Hawaii, and under no circumstances was he to talk. He would only write his answers. I think he followed the doctor's orders religiously and stayed out of harm's way there.

Then when he came back, his voice was pretty good, but as soon as the season started, he went right back. He took speech lessons and everything, learning how to speak, but when it got right down to it, he went to --

Lage: In the middle of the game?

Newell: Yes, he went to habit, and then as the season went on, his voice got worse and worse and worse, almost to the point where you were really worried about something more serious. So it was a season when he wasn't able to coach; he was in and out, and then his wife got cancer. Jack sent her back to a clinic in New York; and Bill was going back and forth, and the assistant coach was coaching most of the time.

Right in the middle of this, Jack had a heart attack.

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Newell: It was before a game. Bob Kerlin, his doctor, was there, and they carried him in, they put him on a sofa in his office, and got Kerlin. Bob went in there and gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and all, which everybody kidded the hell out of him on. And pumped him, and actually he was gone for a short time, from what we understand. Bob got him back to life. He went over to the hospital across the street, Daniel Freeman Hospital, and of course, he was in intensive care.

Jack's mother was a wonderful lady. She looked like one of those posters of everybody's grandma. She loved Jack and Jack loved her. I'm telling you, Jack was so proud of her, and of course she was proud of him, and it was a wonderful relationship. She loved this one player that he hated. He didn't like this player worth a damn, and she loved this player, because this player was a real con artist. He'd go out of his way to, "Oh, Mrs. Cooke, you look lovely tonight," and she loved to hear that. And it killed Jack, because Jack knew she was getting conned by him and all that.

So she goes to see Jack in the hospital, and Jack just doesn't have a normal conversation. It's almost, as I say, a scene from Shakespeare or something like that. He says--this is the way the story goes--"Mother, would you believe it? Mother, I was actually dead for twenty seconds. Would you believe that?" She looks at him and she says, "Jack, which way were you going?" [laughter] Now, I don't know the truth, but that was the story that was circulated, and it sounded to me like it could have been her. But it was really great.

So anyway, now, get this. Jack comes back, but he's limited duty. Jack was a hands-on owner. I liked that. He was always available to you, and God, he called me, I felt like a doctor at midnight. I quit playing golf in that period, because I'd be out playing golf and I'd get a call from him.

So when he comes back, he's only able to work a short time. And when he wasn't there, it was very difficult for me to get things done. We had a couple of contract things that could have been done, I think, if he was there. I think I could have persuaded the players to extend the contracts.

Lage: You couldn't get them done because you knew he had to approve them?

Newell: He had a fellow, Jim Locher, a very loyal, able, bright CPA-kind of assistant, and he was his money man, took care of the money matters. Jack had implicit faith in him, and Jack wanted him to make these decisions on these money matters. He was reluctant to agree to anything because he couldn't bring it up to Jack, because Jack was in the hospital.

We had a player who was very upset because he felt, when he came to the Lakers, that he had really been taken advantage of by the club he'd been with. He had signed a contract that really wasn't the club he was with, it was the club before. He'd been traded by this club to a second club, and then I got him from that club. He was a damn good player.

Lage: And he was still under--?

Newell: Yes, he was still under that contract there. He was a player that, when they had some black-white problems there, he was a guy that really worked for the coaches and owners and he had a lot of respect from the other players. He was a very physical guy to begin with. A lot of waters, he smoothed.

Lage: Was he black or white?

Newell: He was a black player, and hard-working; he would give you a real good night's work every game. But he was a very sensitive person, almost to a fault, and he had done all this for this other ownership, and they took care of everybody but him. They took care of all the other black players, and he never did get taken care of. He really resented it, and he wasn't playing that good with this other team.

So when I got him, that's one of the first things he asked, and I said, "I'll bring it up with the owner. I won't guarantee; we don't change contracts, but I will bring it up." He got to the point where he wanted to get an answer, which was understandable, and I couldn't get an answer.

But I had a plan that I felt would satisfy Jack if I could have talked to him, and that was if you've got a year to go on your contract, or maybe got another year to go--maybe you've got next year and this year, you're finishing out, and you feel that you should get more money that next year, there's a way you can do that without changing any policy. What I would do is just extend your contract another year and give you a bonus for signing, and then apply that to your next year's contract, and that gets you up to the level that he wanted. If the player was worth that.

Well, this player was. This player later--Bill Bridges was his name--went to the Golden State Warriors. I got a call from the Warriors in the middle of the next year. The general manager there--the year they won it--needed a guy like Bill. We'd let him go, because Jack was not going to change anything, and Bill was very upset.

So the Warrior general manager asked me, could Bill help us? I told him, "Absolutely he could help you. His problem here was a very understandable problem to him, and to me. If you just take care of him, just

treat him nice dollarwise, you've got a player who can really help you." A lot of players that were on that team feel that Bill Bridges was the one that won the championship for them, because he gave a stability and a leadership to it. Also, they were playing Chicago again and there was a player on the Chicago team that was just giving them fits. Bill was built like one of those male models you see, and he put a back screen on this player, and the rest of the series, the guy kept looking over his shoulder for the next back screen. But that's the kind of player he was; he was a very, very physical guy. Rick Barry was on that team, and he made Rick Barry play his level best, because Rick had a tendency sometimes to get all out of sorts.

Lage: And he was another one of these motivators.

Newell: Yes.

Lage: So you lost players, and you didn't--

Newell: Yes. And now, to compound the problem, again Jack Kent Cooke was the principal owner of Teleprompter. When I went with the Lakers, Teleprompters was at 46, right in there--44, 46. Teleprompter went all the way down eventually to 1 1/2, from 46.

Lage: Oh, the stock price?

Newell: The stock, yes. Now, this happened over a period of time, and Jack had tremendous holdings in it. Now Jack, when he got well, had to go back to New York. I've got Bill, with his wife very ill, and Bill can't speak, and you've got all these problems. God almighty, it was Berkeley all over. It was a very turbulent period, very, very turbulent, and very difficult.

It wasn't that I didn't get along with Jim Locher, the CPA fellow. I don't know exactly what his title was, but he was the right-hand man for Jack. But I understood his position, too, because Jack expected him to make all the decisions, the right decisions, and--

Lage: But he didn't have the basketball background.

Newell: No, he didn't. He had no basketball knowledge. In fact, we talked one time about the amount of money the players were making. I said, "Well, every time you worry about that, just take a look at that building in there during a game and see all those people up there. You could have a lot of people playing on this team for a lot less money, but you'd have a lot less people up there, too. So look at it from that standpoint, don't look at it from they're

not Harvard-educated, and they're not lawyers or CPAs or whatever. They're professional people in a profession that they're very good at."

It was just the problem of Jack not being there, and Jack being a hands-on owner. And if he just left it up to me to make the decisions, it would have been a lot easier. But some of these decisions were out of my hands, negotiating with agents and things like that. They were just out of my hands. But when Jack was there, I never dealt through the other fellow. I dealt directly with Jack.

Some Administrative Lessons from Jack Kent Cooke

Newell: I tell you, Jack taught me some real good administrative things. One was very, very important when you're in that kind of a job, to always have a pad by your phone, and every phone call you get, you date it and time it, and who it's from, and what the subject is. You just don't ever throw away the pad, just keep going. When you get rid of that pad, get another pad. God, that really was a help. I never had done that when I was at Cal. I never had quite the same reason--you wouldn't get the same kind of calls, but it still would have been a damn good habit to have in any kind of an administrative job. I would talk with an agent, and we'd, say, talk a trade, and he'd say, "We'll do this and this and this," and I'd say, "Well, let me talk to Jack," but we wouldn't make the trade.

Then maybe two months later, we'd be talking, and we'd bring up the topic. I'd say, "Well, before you said you'd do--" "Oh, no, I never said that." I said, "Well, I'll tell you exactly when you said it, such and such, such and such, such and such." "Well, gee, I didn't know I said that." I'd say, "Well, I've got it right here in front of me." Of course, they all knew that I wrote everything down. I got that from Jack.

Jack worked very hard himself. He was at the office every morning, and he'd leave the same time every evening.

Lage: It was a job for him.

Newell: Yes. So I had no problem. A lot of people say, "Oh God, it would be terrible to work for him, the worst thing in the world," because he's so over-organized. Well, he wasn't really over-organized, he was just hands-on. But he was not a guy that you couldn't talk to. He was always successful, that's what I liked. One of the problems Bob had in San Diego were these other people that didn't know the game pounding the owner's ear. But with

Jack, you knew that he really did his homework, and you asked me the question before: he really would be in the top 10 percent of the owners in knowledge of the game. Never having played it, never even being involved in it until he became an owner, it was amazing that he had a great innate sense of what constituted good playing, what constituted successful playing. And I respected that, I really did. He'd drive you crazy sometimes on little things, but I never really had a problem with him, I never did.

And the reason I left was because I'd been in athletics enough at that time, and I just wanted to take a step back, and maybe down the road I would consult or something like that. I had a four-year contract, and I was going to leave after two years. He said, "Peter, a contract is a contract. Now, you agreed four years," and I said, "That's right, Jack." He said, "I expect you to abide by it." I said, "Well, I will."

It was before he became ill, or about the time he went to Teleprompter, because I felt really handcuffed on a lot of these things. I understood, but at the same time, it really hampered me in trying to manage a team because I didn't have some latitude in areas where I really needed it. I didn't blame anybody, and I understood that he didn't know me that well, and he had implicit faith and confidence in Jim Locher--and he should, because the guy was a very loyal, hard-working, bright guy--but there was a conflict. He didn't know anything about basketball, and Jim had a tendency to be real tough on people.

Lage: You seem to understand the players' position a little more.

Newell: Yes. Well, he never understood that, no. But as I say, when Jack was there, I never had that problem. Jim was an abrasive guy. One time he fired somebody, and about three nights later the guy was waiting for him and just beat the hell out of him, right at the Forum there. Just pounded him. I think it was before I came there. Yet I never personally had a problem with him. It was just that he had his job to do, and I had my job to do, and Jack was sick, and then he had this other problem; he had a tremendous holding in Teleprompter. [laughs] The first thing he did when he got back there, he went through the offices and he sold all the television sets that were in the office. Then he did a couple of other things, and he had that stock up about eight points, and I think he'd only been there two months. He did it. He just went through like a cyclone. I could see him. Because if you worked for Jack Kent Cooke, you worked. And if you didn't want to work, don't ever work for him.

He was a lesson; he was a lesson. But he sold the club, and a lot of those people were there for a long time, and I don't think he ever gave them

any bonuses. He sold the team for a pot full. But that was Jack. Gratitude is under G in the dictionary.

The Famous Kareem Trade, 1975

Lage: Now, tell me how the Kareem [Abdul-Jabbar] trade came about. How did you get that complicated deal put together?

Newell: We had accumulated these draft choices through some of the trades. We were in a period of adjustment, and we had made up our minds that Elmore Smith was not going to be able to do the job that we needed at center. But he had a lot of attractiveness because he was young and he was a tremendous shot blocker. There were teams that wanted him first for that. But the way Bill Sharman played, he needed more of a scoring center, and a different kind of a center.

Well, we came to the conclusion that we had to get a center. I was talking with Wayne Embry, the fellow I work for now, actually. Wayne and I had made trades together, and we were good friends. There was one year to go on Kareem's contract with Milwaukee. New York needed a center, and New York had a president there that wasn't versed in basketball, didn't know much about it. In fact, one time Red Auerbach and I were sitting and watching a game in the Garden, and he was sitting behind us with Eddie Donovan, his general manager. In a voice that we could hear, he said, "Who's the best player in college basketball this year?" We were watching a pro game, the Knicks and the Celtics. Eddie said, "Well, this center out at UCLA, Bill Walton."

He said, "Well, let's go sign him." "Well, you've got to understand that we have a draft." "Well, the hell with the draft. Let's go sign him." Red is looking at me like this, and I'm looking at Red, and I say, "What the hell is this guy doing running a ball club? He's going to go out and sign people, and he doesn't even know you've got a draft." That kind of stopped the conversation, but that gives you an idea of where this guy came from.

I had had a friend that was at a party, some kind of reception, and this guy [New York president] was there. This guy was kind of a flamboyant guy, and he had a lot of ideas on everything. My friend at the party overheard him say, "Well, we're going to sign that Kareem from that Milwaukee team. He's going to be our center next year. We'll probably sign him this year and send him to Europe to play out the year of his contract" (his contract would expire after a year) "and then bring him in the next

year." And he's talking like that, which is ridiculous if you're going to do something like that, to talk.

My friend called me and tells me about it. So I get hold of Wayne. And I've been talking with Wayne about a possible trade for Kareem, because we were interested, but they didn't want to trade. Kareem had helped win the championship, and they were hoping that they could sign him to another contract. But they really knew down deep that it was no hope. He was from New York and wanted, in a sense, to go back there.

So I'm talking with Wayne, and I say, "Wayne, this is what came to me." We all knew about the story about Bill Walton, and this guy going to sign Walton, kind of indicated where the guy came from, number one, but that became a story all over the league, it was so damn funny. But what's his name, Wayne said, "Well, I can't convince our people." I said, "Well, stay at it, because we're in a position to give you more than anybody can give you. We have the first and third draft choice. We have a center," and then they wanted this young guard we had that made the rookie All-Star team, Brian Winters. Winters is now the coach of the new NBA Vancouver team.

Lage: That was a lot of people to give up.

Newell: Oh, yes, to get Kareem. But to get a center like Kareem, you could give up twice that and you'd be ahead, because you can always build around him, which is what eventually happened. And that was something Jack had kind of a blueprint of.

So in the meantime, Jack was talking with Larry Weinberg, who was the owner of Portland. They had come to a general agreement without formalizing anything, that we'd make a trade with Portland for Walton.

Lage: Who had made that agreement?

Newell: Jack Kent Cooke. He was talking with Weinberg--

Lage: On his own?

Newell: And he had lunch with Weinberg the day before.

Lage: While you're trying to negotiate for Kareem?

Newell: Yes, because the Kareem thing, I was there talking day after day. But the people there just didn't want to negotiate. They were afraid to give him up. But when I dropped this New York thing on Wayne, he went right to their

people and he told them, "This guy, we won't even have him next year," which I told him, "You may not have him next year. He'll spend that year of his contract"--in those days you could do it--"being paid by the Knicks to play in Europe, and then he'll come back, and you don't get him, you don't get nothing for him. So you better let your people realize what they may be passing, giving up."

It's the morning of the meeting. Jack and I and Alan Rothenberg and Jim Locher, Bill Sharman, we're all in Jack's office.

Lage: How about Chick Hearn? We haven't talked about him. Would he have been in it?

Newell: He may have been there, but I don't think he was in at that particular time. Chick was my assistant general manager, and he helped in a lot of areas. But Jack was talking about the luncheon he had and the meeting he had, and what would we give up to make that trade? Well, it was not as much as what eventually we gave up for Kareem, because Bill Walton at that time was a hippie, and he was everything Jack hated.

Lage: And wasn't he injured, or had just been injured?

Newell: He had some injuries, yes. Always had the foot problem. But he had the long hair, and he had that guy Scott around him, remember that Scott that was such a problem?

Lage: Jack Scott?

Newell: Yes. Jack [Cooke], as I say, didn't like any part of that. But we got to the point where he knew he could play basketball, and he was a good basketball player. The man later won a championship there.

Lage: Which way did you want to go?

Newell: Well, I would rather have Kareem, because at that time, Jack Scott was around Walton. I didn't have any dealings with Scott, but I had a little experience with that guy when he was at Cal. He was one of those professional students, one of those guys that leeches on to anything that will bring him publicity--even the Patty Hearst thing, remember?

Lage: Oh, yes, he was involved with that.

Newell: Sure, yes. And he was the kind of a guy that used people. I didn't want him. But at the same time, I wanted to get the team turned around. So I

wouldn't throw out the Walton idea. But Kareem was the one that we were most interested in.

I get a call from Wayne. I get on the phone and Wayne said, "I think we can make that trade." I said, "Jeez, that's great, Wayne. What happened?" He said, "Well, I explained about the Knicks thing and all, and our people recognize that we're going to lose him. So they're convinced that if we don't do it, we're going to end up with nothing. This sounds like a way that we can really structure our whole team."

So I said, "Great. Let me talk to Jack, and I'll get back to you." So I went in, and I said, "Jack, I got a call from Wayne Embry." "You did, Peter?" I said, "Yeah. He says he thinks we can work that." "My God! Where is he?" I said, "Well, I'm going to call him back at this number." "My God, Peter, call him right now."

So I did right from there. The president of their club was with Wayne. He and Jack agreed that we'd meet in Denver at the airport. They got a room there. Locher and Rothenberg and I, and then Wayne and this fellow, and we met there. We didn't get the thing totally done. In the meantime, he's kind of stalling the Weinberg thing, because you never know a trade is made until it's actually made and okayed by the league office. So you always have to keep other lines that you may have alive.

Lage: Do you talk to Kareem in any of this?

Newell: No, we didn't talk to Kareem. But Kareem had gone to UCLA, and he knew LA. He had a good experience at UCLA, so we knew that we were one of the cities that he would prefer to go to. But publicly, he had stated New York was his first, because his folks were there.

During our Denver meeting Locher is calling Jack every ten minutes. Rothenberg was a lawyer, and a real bright guy. Milwaukee was going to go back and talk about it. Jack says to Rothenberg, "Alan, I want you to go back with them." "Go back to Milwaukee?" "Yes, you go with him. I want you there, and you be with them all the way back there, and then you be with them tomorrow morning." Well, Alan did. Alan went back, and Jim and I came back home. Alan got on the plane with them, stayed with them, practically drove them home, and then the next morning met with them and

got the thing all ironed out and called the league office. We got it done the next day [June 16, 1975].[1]

Of course, the Knicks, jeez, they were really upset, because they really thought they had him. They had no idea that we were as close as we were. Nobody, even the media didn't know, because Wayne and I were good friends, and we kept things to each other. We'd made trades in the past.

Lage: Did you meet Wayne just through these trades, or did you know him when he was a player?

Newell: Not really. I didn't know him as a player, but I traded him Curtis Perry when I was with San Diego. Our coach at the time in San Diego, Alex Hannum, wasn't that high on Curtis Perry. He wasn't that much of a shooter. He was a great rebounder and kind of a prototype of a power forward, like Oakley, those kind of guys. Real good rebounder, good defensive player, good athlete. Not a good outside shooter, but good rebounder, and would get baskets in the basket area. I got a player that played well for them and a guy we needed, a guy with a lot of speed and quickness. Perry really had a lot to do with Milwaukee winning the championship. Of course, Oscar and Kareem were the main players, but Curtis was just the ingredient that they needed there.

And then we had made another trade somewhere along the way, so we'd had a--

Lage: You had a working relationship.

Newell: When you make a good trade with people, both teams are satisfied, and you find out that you didn't get damaged goods and what the other guy said was honest, you'll trade again. Some guys you may trade with once and never again.

Lage: And that's it?

Newell: And that's it, you never trade again with them.

Lage: Because you can't trust them?

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[1]The Lakers traded reserve guard Brian Winters and center Elmore Smith, as well as 1975 first-round draft picks Dave Meyers and Junior Bridgeman in return for Kareem and back up center Walt Wesley.

Newell: You can't trust them, they'll use the media to their advantage by, "Oh, boy, we really done these guys, we got so-and-so, and we only had to give up this," kind of a thing. Well, you never do that. A good trade is one where both teams are helped.

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Lage: Then you had to get more players to fill in the team.

Newell: Yes. But we had these draft choices. We were able to make a trade for Gail Goodrich, and that was the one that got Magic [Earvin "Magic" Johnson], I think. They got Magic after I left, but the trade was made at the end of my time there.

Lage: A trade that gave them the draft choice?

Newell: The draft choice from New Orleans made that trade. New Orleans had a young general manager. He used to be kind of a business manager for Gail Goodrich. He had a great relationship with Gail, and he wanted Gail. We were able to give him Gail for a first-round draft choice. And that got Magic. Then we got [James] Worthy--I shouldn't say we; they got Worthy after I left off another draft choice I think we had. I'm trying to think which one that was.

But see, the draft choices, along with Kareem, then they filled in and made some good moves.

Lage: So that Kareem trade was sort of a start to building the team up again.

Newell: Sure. It's like a picture: once you get your center theme in your mind and determined, then the supporting part of it fits in and blends in. But you've got to get the center theme, you've got to get the anchor there, and he was that. So that was the Kareem trade. And I was real happy about that.

Lage: That's the famous one. It's always called "the famous Kareem trade."

Newell: Yes. Well, I was happy because I left again the team with a real good future. Like I felt I had with football at Cal, which was the main thing, and in fact, the basketball program was solid too. Rene had left a good program --good, well-taught players. But football with Ray, I felt very confident that it was on a real solid basis, which it proved to be, and we had survived that recruiting problem that we had with all the turmoil and all.

And with the Lakers, I felt the first year Kareem played we didn't have that good a record, but you could see that it was coming, so I felt secure

that I left them certainly with as much of a future, probably more, than when I came, because so many of those guys who won the championship in 1972 left within two years.

Lage: Yes, that's right. They'd won, but they were--.

Newell: Jerry West, when he resigned [in 1974], that was so unexpected. The night before, I think he scored thirty-three points, against one of the best guards in the country, or in the league--Petrie of Portland, who was an All-World of the future in everybody's mind. He was the rookie of the year and all that. The next day Jerry called me and said, "Pete, I'm retiring."

Lage: Why did he retire?

Newell: He was upset at Jack Kent Cooke.

Lage: And there was a lawsuit after that. He sued Cooke.

Newell: He may have. But he was told by Jack that--and this is Jerry's story--he was told by Jack he would always make as much as Wilt. When Wilt left, in an interview down at San Diego Wilt disclosed what his deal with Jack would have been, and it was more than Jerry's. They were both making $200,000, I think was the figure. But there were a lot of other things that Jerry was not made aware of that made Wilt's income a lot more than Jerry's, and that bothered Jerry. Because he had been told that they would always get the same. He didn't expect him to pay Wilt less, but Jerry the equivalent, the same thing. That was a problem.

Lage: Was the pay for Kareem an issue?

Newell: No. Jack worked that out with Alan Rothenberg.

Lage: This was a period when there was that antitrust suit the players had against the owners. Oscar Robertson was the plaintiff.

Newell: Oh, yes.

Lage: And I guess it was settled, or they won it, in '76.

Newell: The players?

Lage: Yes.

Newell: Yes, I think so.

Lage: Did that have an effect as far as you're concerned? Or did you have any role in it?

Newell: No, I didn't have any part in that. It was there, but I don't recall the specifics of that.

Final Years with the Lakers

Lage: Now, did you have anything to do with bringing Jerry West back as coach? That happened just before you left. Did you get involved in the decision?

Newell: Not directly, but of course, everybody knew Jerry played for me, and Jerry and I were close. In fact, when Jack decided he wanted Jerry, I spent about six hours with Jerry, because Jack knew that Jerry was very upset at him about this other thing.

Lage: I looked at some Los Angeles Times newspapers from that time, and they said that West had sued Cooke when he left the Lakers and that when West was hired as coach, part of the deal was settling this lawsuit.

Newell: That could have been.

Lage: It's a kind of funny way to start out with your owner.

Newell: Yes. But I helped Jerry get his assistants. He got Stan Albeck and Jack McCloskey, and I helped him in that.

Lage: Because he had never coached before. Now, what did you think about that?

Newell: No, he had never coached, but he listened. He got two real experienced coaches, and he listened to them. So they did a good job putting the thing together. Albeck later coached maybe ten years in the NBA as a head coach. Jack McCloskey is general manager of Minnesota. He's been in the NBA ever since then. He came from college; then he was at Portland. He was at Pennsylvania, went to Portland, and he lost out there. He got fired there, and that's about the time that I told Jerry to contact him, because I felt he was an experienced coach, a good college coach, and had been in the NBA a couple of years as a head coach.

He was one of those coaches that got caught in the early years of expansion. They were an expansion team, and they hadn't got it together

yet. But he was a good basketball man. So yes, I was involved in that, but Jack made the decision.

Lage: And [Jerry] Tarkanian was another candidate for the coaching job.

Newell: I had brought Tarkanian in early, a couple of years before, to meet with Jack. I'm trying to think when that was.

Lage: The paper made it sound like he was being considered at the time that West was chosen.

Newell: Yes, he was, but he decided not to come. It was funny: his agent--God, I can't think of his name. When Jerry Buss took over, --now, this is three or four years later, or longer than that--

Lage: When Buss bought the Lakers?

Newell: Yes. Jerry and Jack met with Tarkanian's agent, and he was a guy that I knew real well, and God, he became almost a legend. Even now, they write stories about what happened to him. They met at a hotel in Beverly Hills, not one of the big ones, but a smaller one, a family kind of a hotel there. And after the meeting, he left the meeting and he disappeared. I never did find out how close they were to signing Jerry [Tarkanian] or what exactly was consummated at the meeting, but they found the agent about a week later at a hotel over there in Universal City in the back trunk of his car. He was executed Mafia-style.

Lage: This was Jerry Tarkanian's agent?

Newell: Agent, yes, and his very close friend. The story came out, it became a front-page story for a long time--even now, they refer to it--that he owed a bookie a lot of money, and he was reneging on payoff. That's what the story was. They were waiting for him. He got in his car, and they just moved him over and drove the car, killed him, and then parked the car over there, and they dumped him in the back. The car had been there for about five days. He was executed. It was a gang murder.

Lage: And it was right after the meeting?

Newell: Right after the meeting. They were up there, I was talking to Jerry Tarkanian later, and he said, "God, the guy just left the meeting." See, that's when they transferred the club, and Jack Cooke was helping Jerry Buss make that adjustment.

Jack made the decision on Jerry [West]. He felt that Jerry had leadership and was very committed to basketball and all, and he was right. Jerry just didn't--and probably he will tell you too--have the patience and the temperament that you need. Jerry's a high-strung fellow, and it just wasn't his cup of tea.

Lage: He was only at it about three years, I guess, and then he moved up to general manager.

Newell: Yes, a couple of years. And then moved up, and he's been a fine general manager. He's done a great job of sustaining that great win period they had by very astute trades and good drafts. He's been very good. It's a good organization now, and Jerry Buss is probably the best owner in the league in terms of letting his general manager work without any interference from anybody. Sometimes the owners don't interfere, but they have other people that are close to them that do interfere. But Jerry [West] will tell you, too, he's got the best owner in the league, and that's something.

Lage: I noticed in these news articles when West came on as coach, he talked a lot about motivating the players, that the team was kind of in the doldrums--

Newell: Well, it was.

Lage: And the players weren't playing hard, et cetera.

Newell: Well, he was absolutely right. You see, what had happened was Bill [Sharman] lost his voice, his wife was dying, there were so many problems that took away the commitment and the concentration and the total effort that you need in that one direction for the team, and it showed up in the team and always will. It was again, nobody's fault. Poor Dorothy was just a tremendous help to him and a wonderful lady, and to tragically die so young. She was about ten years younger than Bill, and very, very attractive and a very wholesome, gregarious, and friendly lady. God, I couldn't believe when I heard she had cancer. I think she was maybe just thirty.

Lage: So the doldrums were sort of a reflection of coaching problems rather than the team?

Newell: Yes, the problem at the time, yes. It just was one thing after another. Jack's heart attack, Teleprompter, having to go back there and going from being a hands-on owner to not being involved. When he was in the hospital, he was not involved. A lot of things had to be done, and had to be done in that period.

Lage: So it was kind of opposite from your experience at San Diego, where you took a team that was at the bottom--

Newell: Oh, yes, San Diego was great. Bob was great to work with. That one guy, he never bothered me. He just bothered me in the sense that he had this problem with Jack's [McMahon] weight that I thought was ridiculous. No, I had no problem. San Diego was great. I was into everything--the promotion, the marketing, the P.R. people--

Lage: And you didn't have to do that at L.A. because it had already been done?

Newell: Oh, no, they had all those people for that. So I dealt more with the players and coaches, and the basketball part of it. I had a great secretary; she's still there, Mary Lou Liebisch. She runs the Lakers. Jerry will tell you that. She was great. I brought her in. They had a real young girl in there, and she was a nice girl, but the players were always hanging around. I wanted an older, more mature woman, and she was married and had I think a teenage daughter at the time. And again, I made a good choice, because she's Mrs. Basketball. I tell you, there are more people in Hollywood and Beverly Hills that know Mary Lou, and that she's helped get tickets and things like that over the years.

Lage: You're a good personnel man.

Newell: Well, I don't know. I tell you what, I had a lot of success in hiring P.R. guys. I hired Pete Rozelle [at USF], who became the commissioner. I hired Wiles Hallock, and he became the commissioner of the PAC-10 eventually.

Lage: Did you hire him at Cal?

Newell: At Cal, sure. I got him from Wyoming. I hired another P.R. guy that has gone on--John Thompson, I hired him, and he's done a real good job in the Fiesta Bowl, working in that community there. Also Bob Steiner at Cal who is Jerry Buss's right-hand man and is in charge of the Lakers' media department.

Lage: What about Chick Hearn? Did you hire him, or was he there?

Newell: No, he was there.

Lage: He was announcing.

Newell: He was there before God. [laughter] No, he was there a long time.

Lage: But he hadn't been assistant general manager?

Newell: No, he hadn't been.

Lage: Did that give him a new role, or just a new title?

Newell: No, I would bring him in on all decisions, sure. He was very close to the picture. They changed it after I left; I think he went back to his announcing. A lot of times I'd be scouting and things like that, and I could call him on things and he'd call me, keep me abreast. He was good, and he enjoyed that.

(right) Pete receiving Japan's Emperor Hirohito Medal, The Order of the Sacred Treasure, circa 1987.

(left) Pete with Bobby and Karen Knight, Kentucky Derby, 1991.

Pete Newell and his sons, circa 1985. Left to right: Pete Jr., Greg, Tom, Pete Sr., Roger.

Pete and family, summer 1990. Left to right: Pete Jr., Cappy (Pete's sister), Pete, Greg, Ashleigh (Tom's daughter), Tom, Christopher (Tom's son), Vicki (Greg's wife).

XII CONSULTING FAR AND WIDE, 1977-1994

Consultant for Franklin Mieuli's Warriors, 1977-1986

Lage: After you left the Lakers, you no longer worked full time in basketball, in your jobs with the Golden State Warriors and the Cleveland Cavaliers?

Newell: Yes. After that, I was out of basketball for a year. Florence's health was starting to go, and I wanted to spend more time with her. I had made up my mind that I was just going to kind of back out.

Lage: And you wanted to stay here, in Palos Verdes?

Newell: Yes, and we really liked it here. Florence was very comfortable.

And then, what happened with the Warriors--Bob Feerick suddenly died in 1976, my last year with the Lakers. Bob was general manager and a former coach of the Warriors, former great player in the NBA. Also coached at Santa Clara and played at Santa Clara in his college days. Bob had a heart attack the day of the draft, the morning of the draft, and he was a very, very close personal friend of Franklin [Mieuli, Warriors' owner]. It was a real loss. So Franklin had to revamp everything, and he brought in Scotty Sterling. I'm not sure how much of the staff came in with Scotty, but I know Scotty came in.

Kenny Macker was Franklin's right-hand man, and Kenny and I went to grammar school together. I knew Kenny from way, way back. We lived in the same neighborhood, and we were friends from maybe the fifth, sixth grade, right on, and right through high school. I had kept in touch with Kenny while I was at USF and all, and Kenny had had some big jobs. He was head of P.R. for TWA at a very young age. He and Pete Rozelle went into a business when Pete left the Rams. Kenny was very close to Soriano,

a big Philippine tycoon. He owned the Manila Herald and Ken, I think, became publisher of the Manila Herald, and also Qantas Airlines he owned. Ken was on that board. Ken was very, very big with those people.

Then he finally went into his own P.R. business in San Francisco, did a lot of stuff politically for some of those political people, and then he had other accounts. But he was very close, and he contacted me about coming with the Warriors. I told him, "Kenny, I just don't want to leave here. I don't want to relocate any more." He said, "Well, would you come on up and talk about it? A part-time thing, consultant kind of a thing." I said, "Yeah, I'll do that." I talked to Florence, and she thought it would be okay. She was all for it.

See, at that time, I really wasn't in a position to retire financially. I didn't know all the things that pop up when you retire, the unexpected costs and expenses that you have. I never made that much money in sports. When I was coaching at Cal, I was under the ASUC, and you had nothing, really. As I told you, Nibs Price got $137 a month retirement, or $157 or something like that, after thirty-two years; you can imagine what I got for six.

But I never worried about money. It's a funny thing, I never did. I never made a decision on it, I never dwelled on it as something I've got to have, and Florence was like me; our material needs were not great. We didn't go out a lot to dinner; she liked reading and being home and things like that. So her tastes were not expensive, and mine weren't either. When you're coaching, you kind of like to be out of society, in a sense. You get enough "why did you do this," or "what's going to happen here," and all that, and you hear enough sports just out in your world.

But money wasn't really the reason I went back. Franklin was a good friend, and I had thought a lot of Bob. He felt there was a need for somebody that he really was close to in basketball that he could talk to. This is the way Kenny expressed it to me, and Franklin did too later.

So I went up and talked with them, and talked to Scotty, actually. We worked it out. And it was great; I really enjoyed it. It kept me in the game, and then I was doing the Big Man Camp in the summer at the time. Then a lot of the Warrior players started to come down, and that had a lot to do with the camp sustaining itself.

An Organized Approach to the Draft

Lage: What else did you do for the Warriors? Did you do scouting?

Newell: Well, I was scouting, yes. I would scout, and I kind of set up the draft formula. I had a real good draft system, through the experience of doing this for a long time--an organized way of putting the boards up, and getting all the information on the boards, and keeping abreast of everything that was happening. A lot of teams don't do a very good job. They underprepare. Then Scotty bought my system, and I think Scotty, when he was with New York, did the same thing, because we spent a lot of time in making decisions on, say, the first twenty-five small forwards.

Lage: You went about it a more systematic way, then.

Newell: Yes, real systematic, but only after we had real discussion.

I absolutely demanded one thing--if I took charge of the draft, I wanted to make sure that we stayed with our proposed program. Once we finished our discussions, we didn't change anything. Because the worst thing you can do in the draft is to make last-minute changes. We'd have one-through-ten on the board, we'll say, and every time a guy would be taken by another team, you just take his name off, so we would have a pretty good idea where we stood. Here's a guy we had second over here, he's a power forward; and eighth, maybe a small forward; and fifth, a center; and ninth, a point guard, and all that. Here's a third best power forward, he's still up there, how good is that third compared to the ninth--that kind of a thing.

I didn't want anybody to say, "Well, skip four and go to five." God help you. I'd blister him. "Get your butt out of here. We did this yesterday," and I'd have it agreed. I said, "Now, you understand when we go in there tomorrow, this is the way to go. I'm not saying because this guy is fourth and that guy is fifth over there, we're going to take fourth. We're not going to go past four and go to five." They understood.

Lage: Do you have to work fast?

Newell: You only have two minutes. We never had a problem.

Lage: Two minutes, you have?

Newell: Two minutes between--yes.

Lage: So if you're deciding between the guard and the power forward, you've got to have thought it through already.

Newell: Well, yes, but we would see it coming. Because the two teams ahead of us, we'd have four minutes, say. And we'd have a pretty good idea where they were going to go. It may not be either one of these, then we'd have a chance to talk about our needs, we'd have a lot of discussion about both players. But when it came our turn, we never waited more than fifteen seconds. We never waited more than fifteen seconds to pick our pick.

Lage: Is it an exciting time?

Newell: Scotty loved it. I never saw anybody more anticipatory and more happy when the draft day came. He just loved it. I didn't dislike it, but there was a certain sense of anticipation who you're going to get.

This year, this last year, I've really enjoyed our draft. We had the twenty-second pick at Cleveland, and we had a player we really liked that we didn't think we'd ever had a chance for, so we were trying to trade up for him, but we couldn't do it. Somehow, we felt he was going to go about ten or eleven, and he should have. He should have been in the lottery, but he slipped through the cracks, and it's almost like a free fall, because some of these teams are so badly prepared that when a player like that shows up, they're not prepared for him, and they can't make the adjustment.

Well, when I, and the other guys too, when we saw him go to a certain point, he got down to seventeen, eighteen, we knew we had a chance. And by God, he did show up for us, and we grabbed him. We called them in; they didn't have to call us. We grabbed him, and he turned out to be a heck of a player for us, a rookie. Kid by the name of Chris Mills, who played at Arizona. But we're organized at Cleveland, too; it's very well organized.

Lage: Do you do the same thing at Cleveland?

Newell: No, I don't.

Lage: Do you have as big a role?

Newell: They have a similar kind of a program. We discuss these people. We have the boards, though, yes, but not the same way. I have no quarrel with how they do it. It's organized, that's what the important thing is. We're right up on the draft, and we don't waste any time either. When the draft comes, we're prepared if the guy that we want is there; if he isn't, we're prepared for the number-two choice.

Lage: What do you look for? How do you pick a good player?

Newell: Two things. You look for the ability of a player, and then you look for the need of your team. Sometimes there's a conflict there. Your need--we don't have a center, so we have to get a center. Quality--yes, we have a pretty good point guard, but this is an outstanding player. This is an outstanding player. Even though you have strength at that position, should we draft him over this maybe average player in a position where we have a need?

Well, it is not an easy decision. You can say sometimes you do it one way, sometimes you do it the other. But most often, I would prefer to have two great players at point guard, say, and then we have a choice, rather than draft a mediocre big man where we may have a need, at power forward, we'll say. Then we have the option to trade one or the other point guard to get a much more quality player that we know is going to be able to help us.

An Aside on Japanese Basketball Today

[telephone interruption--The telephone call had to do with current politics in Japanese basketball, and led to the following discussion.]

Newell: They have two groups there.

Lage: In Japan?

Newell: Yes. They have the colleges and the companies--company basketball is like our NBA--and there's a big battle going on between the colleges and the JABBA [Japanese Amateur Basketball Association], which is the accrediting agency. It's the one licensed by FIBA to represent Japan, and it's like our old AAU. The two are at each others' throats. It's a problem, because there's some self-serving people in JABBA now, coaches that are in control of picking teams and using their power to help them in their recruiting, and some self-serving things that really bother me. The companies are wanting to move out all the way away from them. Of course, I'm in the companies' corner.

They made a terrible mistake, Ann. I've gone over there--I prepared them for the '64 Olympics-- for over thirty years now. And I've brought over many, many top coaches to Japan. We've all done it--

Lage: Have you done it through the company system, or--

Newell: No, I've done it through JABBA. But JABBA had different kinds of people when I first became associated with them. As I say, I brought over all these coaches, and we all volunteered our time. In fact, the first few years I went over there, I lost money. I told you that before. But it was all right, I felt it was a good cause. Now, they give me a per diem, and a liberal enough per diem where I don't lose any money and I buy a present or two for people and come home with it. They're great people, and it's a great experience for me, but I've never, nor anybody I've ever brought over there to coach--and I brought some great coaches there to work for the program--never have any of them ever asked for any money. Because I don't believe in it. They asked me originally would I consider being their national coach, and I said under no circumstances. I'd be a consultant, but you've got to have a Japanese as coach.

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Newell: Now what's happened is, what I just was talking about on the phone, is that JABBA has hired this American coach to be their national coach, a coach that I don't know--I haven't talked to a coach yet that knows him. He's from a Division III team, and he's never been associated with the Japanese. He coaches at Willamette, and he may be a fair enough coach, but they really slap the face of every Japanese coach when they bring in an American or any foreigner to coach their team, because they're saying, "Our guys aren't capable enough."

Well, their men are. This one young coach--both these coaches played on national teams I consulted with and helped the coach with. They're now coaches that are eligible to be the national coach. One of them was the assistant coach at the last Olympic qualification tournament, Fujimoto, and his team won the championship this year in Japan. He's young, and he's bright, and he works his butt off. He comes over here and spends sometimes two months studying basketball in this country.

And they bypass these people by bringing in this American and pay him $60,000 for about three or four months. The point is, it's bad enough paying them. I would never take a dime from them. Today, if they said, "I'll give you $100,000 to go coach," I wouldn't do it, because it would be against every principle I believe in as far as Japan is concerned and their basketball. I have a real faith in their coaches. Sure, they may not in some ways be as good as American coaches, and in other ways they are. They speak the language--obviously they speak the language--but as a consultant, you can have a good input with the coaches if you're on the same page,

which most of the time I've always been on the same page with the coaches.

But when they did this, they just created a problem that is almost unsurmountable. Because now, the company teams have the best players, and they want to secede from JABBA, and that's what they wanted to meet with me about yesterday. They don't want anything to do with JABBA. They don't want their players to play for the national team, or even try for it.

Lage: Because of the hiring of this American coach?

Newell: Yes. Because of JABBA unilaterally doing what they did. Well, to make a long story short, some of the people that are still in JABBA are guys that I know, and supposedly the two sides got together and agreed that, "We'll let Peter-san make the decision whether we should have this man as coach." Now, I've heard this from several of the coaches on the company side. I haven't heard anything from JABBA. Until I hear anything from JABBA, I--but JABBA is a different JABBA than I knew. JABBA is the Japanese Amateur Basketball Association, and so until I hear from them, I don't particularly want to be involved other than for the sake of Japan basketball, I would involve myself.

But when I was over there this last time, I had a press conference with the media on this whole issue, because they were all upset about it. I told them just what I'm telling you. I said that one of the biggest differences I see in Japanese basketball today is that at the JABBA level, I don't see the same committed, dedicated people for Japanese basketball I used to see. I see more self-serving, more people interested in their own egos and positions than in Japan. I said Japan itself is almost on the back burner. To satisfy their own things is more important.

[telephone interruption]

Professional Sports Today--Marketing, the Name of the Game

Newell: There's just almost kind of a sinister--with this professionalism of sports today, Ann, you get a lot of these things. Control, control, control. We see--

Lage: What do you mean by professionalism of sports?

Newell: Well, the professional intrusion in basketball, for instance. The Dream Team [1992 Olympic basketball team], all that. They've got control of that, because that is very, very important in the total scheme of things, and their NBA properties, their sale of all the items that relate to these star players. So they want their players in Europe representing the U.S., because it means that they'll sell more shirts and socks and--

Lage: The money motive, is that what you're getting at?

Newell: Yes, that's exactly right. Marketing: that's the name of the game. The NBA has hired about 350 people, I think, in the last eight years, and they're in marketing and promotion. I think one guy is in the game of basketball. But that's the basketball business.

Lage: In the range of time you've been in pro basketball, what are the big changes? Is this the one that you would--?

Newell: Yes. I think it's big business now. With big business comes control, control that sometimes is unwanted, and control in areas where they shouldn't control you. But because of the need to have the control, they will put you in cages so that you don't get out and upset their apple cart in any way. It's all about control. Control means money, and influence.

Wayne Embry, the Cavaliers, and Integrity in the NBA

[Interview 5: June 11, 1994]##

Lage: This is the last session of the Pete Newell oral history, and we are in Carmel Valley, at the reunion of Cal's 1959 NCAA championship basketball team. I want to go back to your work with the Warriors for a minute, because we sort of gave it short shrift last time.

Newell: Well, I went there because of Franklin Mieuli, who was the owner. I really enjoyed my time there, because it was family. Al Attles [coach and then general manager] is one of the beautiful people in sports, and elsewhere too. But when Franklin sold the team, I really lost a lot of interest in staying there. The new owner I knew, Mr. Fitzgerald, from his previous ownership in Milwaukee. I didn't know him well, but I knew him. He was well liked, and Franklin felt he was a good friend of his. And if you're a good friend of Franklin, usually you're a good friend of mine.

But as I say, when Franklin got out, I really didn't have any interest in staying with the Warriors, because I felt too that they should bring in all new people, which they did basically.

Lage: That was in September, 1986?

Newell: Yes, right in there. I hadn't anticipated even being in the NBA then. I had retired before, and then went with Franklin, and that lasted about eight or nine years.

Right after this, I got a call from a very close friend of mine, Wayne Embry, who was the Milwaukee general manager when I was with the Lakers, and of course, I knew him way back when I was the general manager of San Diego.

Lage: How did you know him? How did you get to know him so well? He was a player?

Newell: He was originally a player, and then he got into management, and that's when I first knew him, when he was with Milwaukee. Then he became general manager. We used to scout together. He was scouting, so when you're out scouting with NBA people, usually friendship ensues, at least with some of the people you feel are people that you'd like to know better and all. And Wayne is very, very well respected in basketball, not only as a basketball mind but as a person.

Incidentally, he was the first black general manager of a major professional sport. He's a great role model. I think that the way he's gone about managing and what he has accomplished has made it possible for other black administrative people to come on into the NBA, and probably there aren't as many as there should be.

Lage: Yes, you always hear that, that the management circles are more white.

Newell: It's true, it is more white, just like ownership is more white. Probably that's maybe one of the reasons. But at the same time, I think the success he's had has caused some of the owners to look more for capable people, regardless of the color, which is basically the way it should be, rather than "hire more black people" or "hire just white people," it should be, "Who is qualified for this?" And he has shown that he's got all the qualities that any owner would want in a general manager.

Above all, he's got integrity, and when you--we made trades together when I was at the Lakers. Before the Kareem trade, we had made trades. One thing in the NBA, when you've been in it for a while and you've been,

say, at the administrative level, making trades and dealing with other general managers on other issues, but principally on players, you get to know their integrity and honesty and how much you can believe and rely on their word. Probably, of all the things today in the NBA, probably fewer general managers really rely on the integrity of the other man than before.

The reason for that is that if, say, you and I are making a trade, you're with a franchise, and we're talking people, it's very important that you respect my position, I respect your position, so we don't make it public. Because if we're talking about one of your players, and I tell our media, "Well, Ann is willing to trade so-and-so for one of our players," without my naming our player, but I'm naming yours, I create a real problem for you. That player now, he's being rejected by his team, and his wife, if he is married, she's really upset, because now it means--they've got kids, and even if they don't, they have to move, and all the problems it causes. Although many trades are trades that help both teams, more often than not the player himself thinks of it as a rejection. It's really sad, but often it isn't a rejection at all.

Drafting and Trading Kevin Johnson, and Principles of Trading

Newell: To give you an example, Kevin Johnson--this was early on when I was with Cleveland. Of course, I knew Kevin from Cal, and had seen him play, and thought so much of him. I do the scouting out in the West for Cleveland, that I was very, very pro-Kevin Johnson, a great fan of his.

Lage: Was he as well known by other people?

Newell: No, he wasn't as well known, because Cal wasn't on TV or anything like that at the time. I had seen him play enough over the period of time he was at Cal to know he had every ability in the world you would want in a point guard. We eventually took Kevin Johnson very, very high, much higher than anybody ever projected that he would ever go. We'd made up our mind well before the draft that he was the one we wanted. We were certain he was going to be there, because other teams had not talked that much about him. Some people didn't even have him projected in the first round, which is ridiculous, but that happens to West Coast players, because it's so much a Middle West and Eastern-oriented league, really.

After one year we made a trade for Kevin. We had Mark Price at point guard, who had a great year the year before, and Mark is truly one of the finest shooters in the NBA, a real competitive guy. Kevin was a rookie, and I

am sure Kevin would agree that Mark is the kind of a player that, if you are playing behind him, you're not going to get much of a chance to show that you could play better, even if you could. Kevin doesn't really figure to get that many minutes his first year, but being a competitive kid, he wants his minutes like any rookie would want. We had this chance to make this big trade with Phoenix. We didn't have forwards, and they really needed a Kevin Johnson.

Well, so we traded Kevin for Larry Nance, who was about a five-year, six-year All-Star, I believe, and another forward, Mike Sanders, who both then started for us, really helped our team. And Kevin made the Phoenix team. He gave them the ingredients--

Lage: He became their main--

Newell: Yes, he became their man, and he became their leader out there, and has had a tremendous career.

Well, when we made the trade, Kevin really was down, because he viewed it first as rejection. I sat down and talked with him on the thing, and wanted to help him understand that he should look at it as opportunity. Because with us, his playing time would be limited; we had a point guard. You say, "Well, why did you ever draft him?" Because we knew--as close as you can ever know anything--he was just an exceptional talent, and if something happened to Mark, that we were really fortunate to have such a quality player being able to step in.

We had never, ever drafted him with the idea of trading him, but here comes this trade opportunity where we can help ourselves at this position.

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Newell: It's never an easy decision. You can say sometimes you do it one way, sometimes you do it the other. But we preferred to believe that we would get Kevin and have two great players at point guard, rather than draft a mediocre big man where we may have a need, a power forward we'll say. Then we have a choice; we can trade one or the other and get a much more quality player that we know about, that we know is going to be able to help us, which is what happened. We got Nance, who was one of the real quality forwards. They were making complete changes at Phoenix at the time, they didn't want to give up Larry, but they knew, and anybody that knows the game, knows that--and especially from a management standpoint --to get a good player, you have to give a good player.

Any trade that you make, you should always evaluate the trade in terms of how much does this help you. You'd be surprised, some of these people don't understand this. I had a general manager tell me one time, "Well, Pete, that's going to help you more than it's going to help us." I said, "Repeat that." I said, "Our guy will help you." "Oh, yeah." "Well, isn't that what it's all about, to make your team better? He's going to make your team better than the guy you're getting rid of, and the guy we're getting we think is going to make our team better. Because we have a need for his particular skills," whatever they may be. "You obviously have a need for our player's skills. Shouldn't you evaluate this whole thing on, are you going to be a better team? Or, is it better for you that you're not going to make us a better team?"

Lage: Of course, if they have to play you during the year, do you look at it that way at all?

Newell: Yes, but look at it this way: if the trade is going to make them a better team, they play eighty-two games a year, they play us four times. And maybe it helps them more than it helps us. Maybe our guy makes them a better team than their guy makes us, so when we play, they're going to be better than we are. But you don't look at it that way.

Lage: You don't play them every day.

Newell: No. You think of eighty-two games. You think of all the games that you're going to be playing, and how does he fit in? Is he a player that can play thirty minutes, twenty-eight minutes? Can he play eighty-two games? Is he a guy that gets hurt, is there a temperament problem? All these things you weigh in and then you come to the conclusion, how much is he going to help us? And sometimes you're getting rid of a player that will help this team, but he's not happy, he's not getting the minutes there, and he's somewhat of a deterrent. So by getting rid of him you're getting rid of a little cancer, maybe, and you're adding a kid that maybe is a real good team player and he fits in that one missing element that you don't have.

Lage: A lot of subtlety to this.

Newell: Oh, yes. You just don't say, "Oh, that guy's a great player." One thing you would never want to do in trading is trade for a player that the coach wants.

Lage: Oh, really?

Newell: Yes. Not that you wouldn't, but you can really be trapped, because it may be that when you play this particular team that he's on, that the match-up is bad, and he can really beat your guy on the match-up. But because maybe

your guy's a little soft at that position. But you put a real tough defensive man against him, the guy wilts, and he doesn't compete. But against your guy, the tiger in him comes out--

Lage: Oh, I see, and the coach only sees it--

Newell: Yes. So I made it an absolute rule, and I'd tell a coach, "I'll look at him against other teams." I'd look and see where he's having trouble with the match-up, what teams, particular team--maybe for the Knicks, if he's a power forward, I want to see him play against Oakley, because Oakley will beat on you and put lumps all over you. And to see if he gets intimidated by an Oakley. A lot of players do. Well, you don't want to get a guy like that, because you're going to have to get by Oakley and his team, say, to win the championship. And if this guy is going to wilt when you get to that higher level, because he doesn't like to get that extra elbow and pushed around and beaten on, then what you try to do is skip by that guy.

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Newell: So the Kevin Johnson trade helped both teams, and instead of being a rejection as Kevin originally thought, then he saw it as opportunity.

Lage: Did he understand what had happened?

Newell: Oh, yes. Well, he did eventually, but the immediate thing is, "They don't want me." And that's in baseball and everything else. It's just the way of life. But on reflection, no. He'd probably tell you what I'm telling you right now.

Lage: It was a great thing for him.

Newell: Yes. And not only that, but his first reaction was, "They don't want me. They drafted me, but they don't want me." But lord, we'd have liked to been able to make that trade and keep him, to be honest with you, but if you're ever going to get a quality player in a trade, you have to give up a quality player. There are a lot of circumstances that cause trades to be made that have nothing to do with the regard they have for the player they're trading. But it's just the fact of life, again, that if you're going to get a good player, you've got to give a good player.

Lage: Do you keep in touch with Kevin?

Newell: Oh, I see Kevin, sure. He used to come to my golf tournament for that scholarship, the Cal golf tournament.[1] And I see him during the year. Kevin, he's good people.

Lage: When you think about recruiting a player, do you think about personal qualities?

Newell: Absolutely. That's one of the things. One of the things that I really thought about Kevin was he was really a point guard, and that's what we drafted him to be. This is one of the reasons probably some of the NBA teams that had scouts watching him didn't think as highly of him as we did--because Cal had him playing two-guard. I think the lad's name was Washington, who was about five-ten, a very quick kid and a good friend of Kevin. Kevin voluntarily moved over to be a two guard because Washington wasn't big enough to play a two.

Well, Kevin isn't big enough to be a two-guard in the NBA, and his skills are at point. He knew his skills were at point, and he knew he wasn't big enough to be a two-guard in the NBA, but he also knew for the good of the team that they should have both him and Washington playing, rather than him playing and Washington behind him, and they have a much lesser player playing at two. But that's the kind of person he is. He's a quality person. He wasn't thinking of his NBA career, he wasn't thinking of himself in that sense. He was thinking of what's best for the team, so he sacrificed getting the experience and the play at a one position, which is different than a two. Yet, Washington was his friend, and that was part of the reason--not only for the team, but for his friend. He would give him the opportunity.

To me, that kind of answers your question. I put a lot of weight on something like that. I just feel that if they have that kind of integrity, that kind of loyalty to a team and to a teammate, that's a real plus when I'm looking at a player and I hear things like that.

Lage: And then when you bring your report back, your recommendation, does your boss take those personal qualities into account as you do?

Newell: Well, sure. You take everything into consideration. Of course, Wayne and I think alike on that, and that's one of the reasons I think people in the NBA will tell you that at Cleveland, we never seemed to have problems of players doing things that embarrass the teammates, embarrass themselves, or the franchise. Brad Dougherty and Larry Nance and Mark Price, the players that

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[1]A Cal golf tournament to endow a Pete Newell athletic scholarship.

we have, we're proud of them. They're good citizens, they're good people, and they're good players.

But a guy can be a good player and yet he can be a deterrent to your team, because he puts himself and what he wants and his own pleasures above what's best.

Scouting and Consulting for the Cleveland Cavaliers, 1986-

Lage: You didn't tell me how you happened to go with the Cavaliers.

Newell: Well, Wayne became the general manager after I had left the Warriors. I had no idea, even a thought of staying in the NBA again. He became the general manager, and he called me and asked me if I'd join the organization to scout for the West Coast and consult with him on things, and just be there to bounce things off me that would come up. Because as I say, we'd made trades, we knew each other, we scouted together, and we both came from the same direction. And as I say again, I went with the Warriors because of Franklin, and I went with the Cavaliers for the same reason, because I was comfortable with Wayne. I think we had a mutual trust, and it's been great. The owner is a good man, and it's a good franchise, a very good franchise. It's because they've got good people at the top.

But the day Wayne leaves is the day I leave. I don't need to do that, obviously for sustenance, because I don't take much money. In fact, they tried to give me a raise here a while back, and I didn't even want it, because as I said, "I'm fooling you enough as it is." But anyway.

Lage: Do you do a regular scouting routine?

Newell: I make my own schedule. He knows that I'm going to have an entree--see, I'm not unique in the NBA, but probably nobody in the NBA can go on to more campuses and go into a practice session than I can, because--

Lage: Because you know all the coaches.

Newell: Well, yes, and I've been in the NCAA so long. I've conducted clinics for so many of these coaches. So they know me from basketball, and they appreciate some of the things that I was able to do. So I'm accessible, and they will sit down and talk.

Lage: They'll let you know--

Newell: Yes, they'll talk to me in basketball language. It's just kind of--I'm in the fraternity, put it that way. And a lot of scouts aren't. Not that that's necessary to be a scout, but it is necessary sometimes to have the entree to be able to sit down with a coach in his office or at lunch and just discuss not only his team but other players in his league, which is what I'm often interested in. I'll probably be more interested in finding out what a coach thinks of all of his opponents than I am his own team, because all of us as coaches, we have a tendency to speak more glowingly of our own players because we want the best for them. We don't maybe knowingly do that, but at the same time, you're not going to knock one of your own players.

You're not going to delude anybody either. If you think that there are certain things that he'll never be able to do, you have to kind of share it with the scout--so that you don't cause him to lose his job. For instance, a coach tells you, "Oh, this guy can do this and do that and he's great," all the time, and you find out later that the guy was in trouble all the time, and he wasn't a very good person.

We've had that happen with trainers telling us about players being sound physically and all that, with the Warriors. We had that happen with a high draft choice. The guy that was scouting took it hook, line, and sinker. "Oh, he's fine, he's fine." He wasn't fine. He'd had a bad knee, and it had been a recurring problem, and this trainer had been covering it up.

Lage: That's the kind of thing you want to know about.

Newell: Sure, sure. And the scout just took it without checking other sources.

Anyway, that's how I got with Wayne. I'd do the West Coast scouting, and of course, I'd go back there with Lenny Wilkens, Lenny and his staff.

Dick Hill was one of his assistants. Dick would come out to my camp every year, and so would Lenny. We'd talk about teaching and about various things that would relate to the Cavalier players who would be at camp.

Lage: So you'd consult some then on the coaching aspect?

Newell: Well, yes. I would run drills out there, some of my Big Man drills. Lenny would ask me, and so would Dick Hill, who was kind of in charge of that part. And often there was good follow-up on the things that I did, because Dick believed in them. Dick was a college coach, Wheaton College. He is a good basketball mind and a good basketball man. He would give a follow-up to what I'm doing, which is what I really need. I can help a kid up to a

point, but when he goes back to his team, there has to be repetition there on what I'm asking him to do. A lot of times, there's no repetition, because the team doesn't have a teacher on their staff, and they're all coaches but not teachers.

Lage: So a lot of the teams don't have this kind of training, individual working?

Newell: Not as much as I think they should. I think that every staff ought to have at least one guy that's a teacher. There's a lot of coaches in basketball, Ann, but there's not a lot of teachers. There's a distinct difference, as I've said several times over the course of our talks, that coaching and teaching are two different things.

The Owner, the Players, and the Coach's Authority

Lage: I've heard people say that with the players making such high salaries, that sort of undercuts the authority of the coach somehow. Is that a complication?

Newell: Well, it can. It can. But the good franchises are usually owned by owners that seem to have the process right. They hire people to coach and to run their basketball program, and they let them do it. They're hands-on, but hands-off too. They're hands-on in terms of wanting to know what's happening, and being alert, but they're hands-off in terms of the technical part, by listening to what the coaches say or the general managers--I'm talking about owners--and not involving themselves other than having an opinion. Which, like I'd say with Jerry Buss [Lakers' owner], he'll have an opinion, but if it differs from Jerry West's opinion, Jerry West's opinion will prevail, because Jerry Buss will defer. He hired him to be his basketball man, and he expects him to be right on those decisions. But as a general manager, I really buy that. Like I told you about Jack Kent Cooke, he was a hands-on owner, but mostly, in most every instance, on an issue where you had to have the basketball viewpoint involved in the decision, he would defer to his coach.

Lage: But now we're talking about the relation of the owner to the general manager. But what about the coach and the players? Does the coach have sufficient authority?

Newell: It goes right back to what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is what happens with the parts when now the owner becomes involved with or attached to certain players, or his wife likes this certain player, and the

coach maybe isn't playing that player, or doesn't like what his productivity is. Those are the ones that seem to have the trouble. They're the ones that are listening to the wrong people, they're the ones--

Lage: So it's when the owner interferes.

Newell: The owner interferes. And that was the point I'm making, when you have a Jerry Buss-type owner, he'll have an opinion, but he'll always defer to the basketball man. But some of these people, like the Philadelphia owner, he's always involving himself in those areas that he thinks he knows, but he doesn't know. He doesn't really know. He thinks he does. He owns the team, so he's got to be smarter than everybody. But he isn't. In basketball matters, he isn't. Maybe in making money, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about basketball, and basketball decisions. But because they have more money, they have to be smarter than everything. So that's the mentality of some of the owners.

Those are usually the franchises that don't do very well. Very seldom do you find a franchise with an overinvolvement of the owner, especially in the technical matters of the game, being successful on the court. The Clippers are a perfect example. Every year they have another coach, and there's no continuity there. Over a seven- or eight-year period, they have had some of the best players in the NBA in the franchise, and they've all seemed to one way or another slip through their fingers.

The problem is the lack of continuity, the lack of planning, a lack of having basketball people making basketball decisions. The way it is there, they've learned to concur with the owner, because if they don't, chances are they're not going to be with the organization very long. So it's one of those "Yes, yes," systems, where they don't believe the "yes," but for the sake of job employment, they agree, because the owner gets upset if you don't agree with him, because he's got more money than anybody else so he's got to know more.

Too Many Decisions in the Hands of the Officials?

Lage: We talked last time about what you thought the trends in pro basketball were. You particularly mentioned money and marketing, the business angle.

Newell: Yes. I think what I told you maybe a month ago, we're seeing glaring examples of what I said prevailing right now in these playoffs, where the game is just being lambasted by the media as being so boring. Well, it's

what I told you, that they're so busy in the marketing, they're so busy in promoting, they're so busy in selling their product, they've ignored the product.

As I told you last time, the coaches, in my view, have caught up with the game, and they've caught up with the 24-second clock. There are reasons for it. There's been a change in the NBA in the last few years, and the change--there have been a number of changes, but this is the important change.

The focal offensive problem, or I should say the focal defensive problem most coaches and most teams encountered was the Michael Jordan, the Magic Johnson, the Larry Bird, these kind of super-performers, not only great players but great attractions, who gave the game an image of great, great excitement. But in the last two years, there's been an influx of some of the greatest center talent the league has ever seen, in terms of offensive play.

Well, the focus of the defense before was stopping these more mobile, agile players that played all over the court, and that has shifted now to stopping the centers. What they have contrived as their defensive ploy, or defensive tactic, is to use the 24-second clock to the advantage of the defense. That kind of containment defense has made the game boring, and to counter it I have advocated a longer shot clock.

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Lage: If they don't change the shot clock, will it eventually be balanced out by other types of players coming to the fore?

Newell: No. They'll come up probably with some kind of a redefinition of double down, but all they're doing is begging the point. They're not solving anything, they're not addressing the problem. See, what their answer to things so often is, is really to put more burden on the officials, make the officials make more decisions. I come from 180 degrees: don't make the officials make more decisions; let them make less decisions. The only reason officials were ever brought into the game of basketball was to see that one team didn't get an advantage over another.

Now we have them determining what's a legal defense, what's an illegal defense; we have some officials who wouldn't call it if you pulled a knife on the opponent. They don't call anything. Other officials will call contact much more readily.

Lage: So part of the game is figuring out what your officials are going to do.

Newell: Absolutely, yes. There's such a wide variance, and part of the trouble is, they give them too many decisions, so the more things they have to do, the more mistakes they are going to make. It's just like I was telling you before, Ann, on the foul-out rule. I can't find anybody to give me a good reason for the foul-out rule, and I've asked a lot of basketball people--I ask them the question, "Why do we have the foul-out rule? Give me a reason." And I'm talking with good basketball men, back in Chicago.

I asked this of Phil Jackson, the Chicago Bulls coach, who's a very, very successful coach. He said, "Hey, Pete, we used that in the CBA. That was a good rule. We experimented with it; it was a good rule." I said, "You know, Phil, I've talked to guys, basketball guys, give me one reason why we still have that." There were reasons why they put rules in to begin with, but as the game has progressed, some rules have become antiquated. They become archaic.

Lage: So you wouldn't have players foul out for making a certain number of fouls?

Newell: No. After the sixth foul, there would be a very drastic penalty. Two foul shots, and the ball. So if you're fouling me, you can't foul for profit. I'm going to have the ball and maybe two more points, maybe one more. Maybe no more points, but I've still got the ball. So it isn't to your advantage to foul me. But at the same time, you have the advantage of putting that player back in the game and maybe hiding him and saying, "Now, look, Joe, I don't want you to foul anybody. Stay away from fouls, but I need you in the game. Keep yourself so you're positive. Because you're not positive, you're not helping us if you make that seventh foul. So just don't foul."

But the way it is now, the referee says, "You're out of the game, six fouls." I want the choice with you, the coach, to keep him in and to take the chance that he doesn't get the seventh foul, or the eighth foul, whatever.

Now, you have to put some teeth in it, which I totally agree with. The only argument that I ever get is the one, "Well, they'll just keep fouling maliciously."

Lage: But not if you set up the rule--

Newell: Yes, the teeth would be this--we have these rules, but just have to redefine them, and then put a little more teeth in them. This is what I would suggest, that the officials, if they feel that there is malicious fouling, and they're making a mockery of the rules by doing it, the referee goes over to the bench and says, "Now, this is your warning." The rule would say you get one warning. If you persist, there's going to be a suspension, and

there's going to be a big fine, and it's going to be on both the coach and the player--the suspension and the fine.

Now, if I'm a coach--say you have a player like Dennis Rodman, who is a loose cannon. You've read about that goofy guy with the different-colored hair every game. You're going to take him out of the game. You're not going to let him cause you a $25,000 fine and maybe a two- or three-game suspension. Because if you leave him in there, and he's going through his goofy act, and he just makes mockery, because he makes so much money, $25,000 doesn't mean that much to him, but the coach doesn't make that kind of money. So you've got a hammer there.

The point is, I want the decision in the coach's corner. I don't want the decision always with the officials. See, what happens is, I'm one of the few people in basketball today that has a real living acquaintance with the scandals of '49. There's others who are in the game, but I just happen to be--

Lage: You were in the NIT tournament at the time of those scandals.

Newell: Yes, I was in the tournament. I was a very young coach, and I was very much impressed and depressed by the happenings at that time. I learned that you can't be too vigilant or too observant of the surroundings, and the players' associates. Fortunately, we were an outsider and we didn't have anybody there, so we didn't have any distractions. But in those days, and these scandals occurred and re-occurred, there was probably one dollar bet for every thousand, maybe ten thousand dollars bet today. Just absolutely boggles your mind.

Lage: You mean the betting on college ball?

Newell: On college and professional basketball. The danger is still there today. One of the real dangers to me are the officials.

Lage: Their susceptibility to bribes?

Newell: Their susceptibility, their vulnerability to persuasion, because there is so much money involved. We knew with a lot less money at stake, there were a small number of officials involved, even indicted, in the 1949 scandals. And the officials have much more control over the outcome, because their rulings affect points. They have much more control over the game than even the players in that sense, because the coach may take a player out of the game, play without him, if he sees he's doing bad things out there.

Lage: No one can take the official out.

Newell: Nobody can take the official out, and the official can make the calls that have a great, great effect on the whole game.

Lage: And often they do make a call that determines the end of the game.

Newell: Well, you don't have to determine the end of the game, Ann. You can determine it a lot of ways, and this is one of the things that has always bothered me. I'll give you a for instance.

You're my key player, maybe you're my center. We start the game, and you go on down, and you start to nestle in, in a position at the post, and you back into your man, which you've been doing game after game, and he's been doing it to you game after game. And bang, the official calls an offensive foul on you.

Now, two or three minutes later, your opponent comes down, he starts to back into you. Now you start to hold him off like you've been doing. The official hits you with a foul. Now you've got two fouls, and only four minutes played, and you're a key player. As a coach, I've got to take you out. I can't put you back in for the end of that quarter and half of the next quarter. You can not go into the locker room with more than three fouls. You've got two now. I've got to have you in there, so what I'll probably do is bring you back in with about six minutes to go in the second quarter.

Well, there is now a real edge going for our opponent, because the official has got you, our best player sitting on the bench a good part of that first half. So at the halftime, the game's under pretty good control, and the official hasn't even had to make another call. Maybe he's even made a call or two for the other team, because with you out, the other team is now fourteen, fifteen ahead.

Now we're going into the second half, and we are playing with handcuffs on. Maybe you've got three fouls. So you're much less effective than you normally would be. But now the game gets kind of close, and suddenly you get a fourth foul. You could probably call twelve fouls on a guy like Oakley in a half, if you wanted to get him out of a game, you could get him out easy.

But I'm just giving you a for instance. I don't want the situation where you get the two quick fouls. It could be honest. It could just be two officials seeing the same thing differently. One sees the offensive man, the other sees the defensive man. Two different officials. One is under the basket on one play, the other is under the basket on the other end, and you are the victim of both of these bad calls.

Lage: I see. So if they couldn't eject the players for too many fouls--

Newell: If they couldn't eject, I, as a coach, maybe I would take you out for two or three minutes, put you back in. Maybe you have four fouls at halftime.

Lage: So this gives the officials less control over the game.

Newell: Less control, that's what I'm talking about. Less involvement, less control.

Lage: What kind of reaction do your ideas get?

Newell: There's not enough people that remember, as I say--you talk about the scandals, it's like there's no such thing.

Lage: They don't understand that this can happen?

Newell: "Oh, that happened before." And they delude themselves, saying--and there's a grain of truth to this answer--that, "Oh, the players are making so much money now, why would they fall for a gambler?" I can buy that, to an extent. But the players, none of them make enough money to support a drug habit, and that's something we have now that we didn't use to have. And they're not all making that kind of money.

Lage: And the officials aren't making that kind of money.

Newell: Well, the officials--but they're talking about the players. They only think players got involved in this. They don't understand that officials were involved, too. I lost a regional, actually, because of that.

Lage: You told me about Cal game against Seattle, against Elgin Baylor.

Newell: Sure, sure. So I've always been very, very wary of the possibility of this happening, and I think you have to guard and you have to be vigilant on it. I think the people in charge have to be real knowledgeable about the past of the game, where the game has been, how it got there, why it is where it is now.

And this is not true today in the NBA. I don't think the man there at the top has one idea of what has transpired in basketball. He never was in basketball.

Lage: So he doesn't have this historical outlook?

Newell: No, but he should have. I just feel that it's incumbent upon any commissioner of any sport to know the history of the sport, to know how it

fell into traps. And sure, I can't argue strongly that the players now are less susceptible.

Drugs, and the Pressures of the Game

Lage: Tell me about the drug problem. Is it pretty widespread, or has it gone up and down over time?

Newell: I think it's much less now.

Lage: When was the problem the greatest, would you say?

Newell: It was toughest maybe about eight years ago, or more--probably marijuana and that, maybe fifteen or twenty years ago, when it was the Vietnam thing. It was a way of life. These kids were out on campuses--

Lage: But anti-war protest doesn't necessarily lead to things like cocaine and--

Newell: Well, but the problem is, Ann, that the athlete is the kind of a person that the drug pusher is looking for. He's got money, he lives a high-tension life in terms of competing, and he likes the fast track--not all of them, but a lot of them, they like to go to go-gos and discos and all that stuff. And they're reflective of their society, of their young society, their age group. So they are vulnerable, because they're in areas where these kind of people hang out.

Lage: Was that especially true in L.A., where there was kind of a celebrity, Hollywood connection?

Newell: Sure, that's definitely--. But you know the worst place of all in the NBA was Oakland. More players--

Lage: Really? The Warriors?

Newell: Not only the Warriors, but other players from other teams--Davis from Phoenix--a lot of players--Lucas, before he ever came there. The Edgewater Hotel was so bad that we moved out of there. They had that music, and God almighty, you could smell that marijuana before you ever parked your car. And that was just the first step toward that other stuff. The marijuana after a while doesn't give you the kick that it first gave you, so now you want something that does. It's like your appetite never gets satisfied, once you get on that trail.

I give the league credit, I think the NBA was ahead of the other leagues in really cracking down on these users by giving them a second chance or third chance and then they are out. Basketball is not equivocating, to my knowledge. You take baseball. Baseball has just been the opposite. A guy like Howe, the left-handed pitcher, hell, he's had about eight strikes. When they allowed that, they opened the door to, "Hey, if you try to get us out, we'll take you to court and we'll point out how many chances you gave Howe," and bring up the discrimination again. Howe, being white, makes it a much better case for a black athlete to say, "Hey, he's white, he gets eight; I'm black, I get three?" That kind of a thing.

So there's not been a consistency with baseball, and part of that is they've had so many changes at the top. In basketball we've had drug testing. We had a player association head that died, Larry Fleisher; he was a tough bargainer and all, and he was a brilliant guy, but he was the best of all player reps. Larry Fleisher always kept in his mind that he had a responsibility to the game itself.

As a result, I think that the NBA has been the most consistent, and the drug policy has worked better. I think we had a much worse drug problem twelve, fifteen years ago, than any other sport. I don't know, but it's my feeling that we did. I'd say now, we probably have less. We probably have less.

Another thing about basketball, the schedule helps a little. A baseball team will stay in a city for four days sometimes. And boy, time--you've got a lot of spare time. And the more spare time you have, idle time, you know the old proverb. But basketball, you may play four nights in three cities.

Lage: You don't have time to make those contacts.

Newell: Yes. And you're tired, too. A lot of players don't fly easily. A lot of people have a fear of flying, and certainly it's true of players, some of them. Some of them can't sleep on a plane, and there's a lot of mental as well as physical strain on a basketball player when he's on the road. Football is like basketball; they go in for a day, in and out. But baseball, that always has been a real problem. You have rainouts, and you have a lot of idle time in baseball. You get to the park for a night game maybe three-thirty, four o'clock--your early ones do--and after the game maybe you go out and eat and get a few belts, and hell, it's two o'clock, two-thirty in the morning. You find an after-hours place, some of these guys, because they're so wound up, they're not ready to go to bed.

Happens too in basketball sometimes. They know all the places--and there are places that stay open because they know there are people in the professions, entertainers that are entertaining until one or twelve, and they don't go right home and go to bed. They've got to unwind after their performances. So there are these "in" places. I used to know them in my younger days, but--[laughter]

Lage: You could probably tell us a lot about those places!

Newell: Well, I probably could, but I won't.

Lage: You know about unwinding, at least, or needing to unwind.

Newell: Oh, yes. Coaching is a very lonely life, in a lot of ways. Lonely in the sense that you're living with--there's such a paradox in coaching. You have to talk positively, you have to really gear your thinking to be positive: how are we going to win the game? This is what we do to win it. And then, in the inner recesses of your mind there are these negatives that, "God, if we do this, we'll blow the game," or so on. It's all the negative. But you have to make sure that you convey and communicate to your team the positive aspects of what you're going to do and how you're going to do it.

Lage: That seems to be something you were really successful with with your Cal teams, from everything I've heard.

Newell: It was, but the price for me was I really had to put everything out of my mind at that time, but that doesn't mean that they weren't there. A lot of times, a night before a game, I would sit down--I am not a heavy drinker or anything. The players saw me drink, but they never saw me drunk, because I just either had a capacity for handling--but I never drank a lot, and I never was one of those whisky-kind of drinkers, straight shots or anything like that. It was always a social kind of a thing.

But I would just like to be by myself, just thinking and going over things, and I always liked music. So I would go into a place and sit by myself and listen to a piano bar or something like that, but not sit at the piano bar.

Lage: This was when you were on the road?

Newell: Yes, on the road. But not to pick up anybody or anything like that, it was never that. It was always the music, and I just wanted to be alone with my thoughts, I guess. But then, it would be the negative I would think about, all the things that could cost us to lose the game. But you'd have to never convey that to your team.

Lage: So that's hard in itself, keeping that from your team.

Newell: Oh, yes. Some coaches, they eat the pre-game meal, they can go to bed after a game, and night before a game, and put their head down and go to sleep. I never could do that.

Remembering Florence, and Some of the Cal Players

Lage: Was Florence helpful with things like that, or is it something you can't be helpful with?

Newell: It's hard to be helpful. The worst thing you can do is to have somebody trying to be helpful. But she understood, she understood that that was all part of the devils a coach has to contend with.

Lage: There's a book out now, and I've forgotten the name of the author, called Coach's Wife. A coach's wife has written a book about what it's like.

Newell: I tell you, it takes a special woman to be a coach's wife. She's got to have the patience of Job, she's got to be understanding of the emotional immaturity of her husband, the coach. [laughter] She's got to--I know Florence did this, and I never was conscious of it like I should have been, but she would just make sure that the problems that the kids had, when I'd come home from practice, that she had handled them. And that they stayed there, a lot of times. I never knew a damn thing about them. Sometimes I'd get a little upset because she didn't tell me, but on reflection, I understood that there were problems, but they weren't that big of a magnitude. But they were the kind of things that maybe would cause me to overreact sometimes.

Lage: Because of the tension you were under?

Newell: Yes. And she knew me better than I knew myself. She had a great feel and a sense for what to say and what not to say, not just to me, but about these kind of things. And she understood coaches. That's why Bobby Knight and Bill Fitch and those guys just loved her, because she had a great ability to understand the devils that coaches were fighting, and some of the problems that coaches do encounter in their family life. They always felt very free to talk, and she would never tell me what they talked about, and I never would ask her. They'd talk to her, and that was their business. I didn't really want to know. I had a pretty good idea, because of going through the things

myself, but I really respected the fact that they had this great confidence in her, which I had.

I told you before, every move I ever made, I only made it after I was sure that she thought it was the right one. If she didn't, I just backed off completely. One time, years ago, it would be the soccer commissioner, and I think I told you this.

Lage: No, you didn't tell me. They wanted you to be soccer commissioner?

Newell: Yes, they were forming a soccer league in the Middle West, and had all these franchises. I was at Cal at the time as athletic director, and they offered me a contract, and money about four times what I was making at Cal as athletic director. I think I told you this. I was kind of impressed because they were talking about money I didn't ever come close to making, so you do--it does kind of--

Lage: It doesn't hurt to have a little!

Newell: Yes, it massages your ego a little to even think about it. But we'd never, ever made a decision based on money--like I told you, I took a big loss of money to come to Cal, back to Cal from Michigan State.

But anyway, I came back home, and I'm really, boy, all ready to tell her about all these goodies that they've talked about, and like to have me as--. When I got done, she said, "Let me ask you one thing. What do you know about soccer?" [laughter]

Lage: That's a great one. You haven't told me that.

Newell: Didn't I? Oh, that's a great story. That's a typical--. She didn't--she waited until I told all these things that they had proposed that they would do, and it sounded really great. Now, after she said that to me, I just thought, Well, she did it again. [laughter] And I never regret--

Lage: Did she like the game of basketball? It sounds like it.

Newell: Oh, yes. She and Barbara Benington were so bad that at Michigan State they used to sit way, way up behind on the second deck, as far away as they could from John and me on the bench so we wouldn't hear them, but we could hear them over everybody.

Lage: Is this one of your friends here, right behind you? [tape interruption--This interview took place during the reunion of the 1959 Cal team and Pete refers to the morning's events.]

Newell: That was Rupe Ricksen and George Hill. He was my manager.

Lage: He was manager for the 1959 team?

Newell: Yes. He's been very successful in the insurance business, has his own insurance business. Retired, and I guess he's back in another operation--I'm not exactly sure whether he's a consultant or what.

Lage: How you keep up with what everybody's doing, and their kids, their wives--

Newell: Yes. But as you saw right there at breakfast, that was the team. They really enjoy each other, and you can't believe how they rib each other.

Lage: I saw just a bit of it.

Newell: When Wendell gets up to speak, and they say, "Get off your knees, now. If you're going to talk, stand up and talk." [laughter] Things like that. Or Thunderbird: "Don't stand sideways, we won't be able to see you. Face us, face us." [laughter] That, I think, was the great trait of this team, the way that they could really rag each other.

Lage: Even then?

Newell: And right now. Nobody ever gets mad; all you think about is topping the one that just topped you. And of course, they don't spare me in all of this, either.

Lage: It's a good group.

Newell: I was telling you about Dick Doughty who was one of the best bridge players.

##

Newell: I always played bridge. In fact, when I was at Michigan State, my bridge partner was Jim Dennison, who was a vice president there. We won the faculty bridge tournament one time. And at Cal I played bridge in the Faculty Club all the time. But as far as Dick Doughty knew, I didn't know much about bridge.

But anyway, we're on a plane coming back from the NCAA championship, and I'm putting the needle in him. I say, "Is it true you're supposed to be a pretty good bridge player?" "Yes, I'm a good bridge player." And something to the effect, "I hear you play a little, too," something like that. I said, "Let's just play a rubber." Well, about the

second hand, he's at my left, and he opens up with three diamonds. Do you play bridge?

Lage: I have in the past.

Newell: Well, he opens up with three diamonds, so he's got length and strength, but he doesn't have complete control of his diamonds. It goes around, and I've got the singleton jack of diamonds. I've got a good hand, but I have four-four-four with a singleton. I bid three no-trump. He looks at me like this. I know what he has. I know what he has. He's got the ace, king, queen, ten of diamonds. And he thinks he knows what I have. I've got one stopper. I've got that jack stopper with three, four to the jack, he thinks.

So he leads something else. I run eleven tricks before he ever gets the lead. He's thrown away the queen of diamonds, which is a good trick. He ends up with the ace-king of diamonds, and I throw my singleton jack to him. [laughter] He throws down the cards, "I'll never play bridge with you again. You don't know what you're doing!" I said, "I don't know what I'm doing, Dick, but I know what you're doing. That's more important." [laughter]

Lage: You taught him a lesson.

Newell: Oh, yes. He and I were talking about the pre-game meals. In those days, I'd go down to 162, 163 pounds before the season was over. I didn't eat, but I'd always sit at the pre-game meal. It was fun to sit down with them, because they always had something going.

Lage: Took your mind off it, maybe.

Newell: Yes. For instance, [laughs] Larry Friend, I'll never forget--this is before the 1959 team.

Lage: Larry was on an earlier team?

Newell: Yes. And he and a guy by the name of Burt Mastrov were real good friends. They were both [laughs] real sharp guys, in terms of angles and all that. In fact, Larry started a fraternity when he was at Cal, and jeez, I don't know how, ended up in bankruptcy. Neither one of them had a dime; I said, "How in the hell can you go into bankruptcy when you don't have any money to begin with?" Larry is today an extremely successful businessman in southern California.

Anyway, they'd get a sophomore, and they'd always get on each side of the sophomore, and they have the pre-game steak. The poor sophomore

would get his steak there, and then Burt was over here, and he'd get the kid in conversation, and Burt would talk very low, so the kid was leaning over like this. In the meantime, Larry would sneak a slice of the kid's steak--[laughing] And the poor kid's steak would get smaller and smaller--[laughing] never quite understanding what the hell was happening. And the rest of us are just laughing. It was a ritual.

That was the kind of stuff that would go on. But Dick and I would go at it, because he's a real intellect, very, very bright, and unflappable.

Lage: He looks real calm.

Newell: Yes. He'd say to Imhoff, "Actually, I'm a better basketball player than you. I mean, other than the fact that you can jump higher than I, but what you can you do better? You can't think better than I can about the game. You're not as good a shooter, you're not as good a passer. You can jump better, that's all." And he would say it like that. [laughs] Darrall couldn't refute it: everything he said was right. But anyway.

Our thing would be, I'd say, "You know, you've got to eat vegetables." "Why do I have to eat vegetables?" "Well, you gotta eat vegetables for your whole system. You need the nutrients that you get out of vegetables." "I seem to be doing all right." I'd say, "Well, you better eat your vegetables." He'd say, "Why? Take a look at you, and look at me. You eat vegetables. Take a look at you. Look at me; I don't eat them." He's 230 pounds, about six feet ten. [laughs] He looked great.

At our pre-game meals often--the players will all tell you this, Dalton and Shultz and those guys--just waiting to see what conversations we were going to have this particular meal. We never knew what they were, because we never rehearsed them. But Dick was the kind of a guy that would really challenge you, in terms of not being smartass or anything like that, but just having a very, very kind of laid-back response to everything. Not impressed by anything. He wouldn't be that impressed about the championship. He wouldn't be impressed about the fact that Darrall Imhoff could sink a lot of shots, or that Glenn Seaborg was sitting down with us at a pre-game meal. Now, he wouldn't have disdain for any of that, but he was, as I say, unflappable.

At the same time, the players really, really respected him and really paid attention to him when he said something, because they really respected this intelligence that he had. And he was a tremendously effective player. There were times--

Lage: Would he go in to replace Imhoff?

Newell: Yes, and a lot of times, I put him in there because I needed him to do things that Darrall didn't do as well. He had a lot more experience playing than Darrall. Darrall never lettered in high school.

Lage: You were in the middle of a story about Florence and Barbara Benington at the games. Let's finish that story.

Newell: Oh, yes, they'd sit up in the second deck, and they'd yell at the officials. The officials were their--you know. "Hey, they went that way," and things like that, when the teams were going off the court. [laughing] "You're going to get it right sometime, keep blowing your whistle, you'll get it right pretty soon." They were bad, they were bad. But they'd yell these things, these two shrill women's voices. [laughs] And they'd always do it together. When they first did it, they would be sitting up behind the bench but right close to it. And you know, "Take your act upstairs, will you, for God's sakes? We don't want to have people know that we know you." [laughter]

But Florence, at Cal, she'd be sitting right behind the bench up there usually with Adrian and Billie Kragen. She was better then. She had evidently some great lines for officials. They were kind of her prey. But they usually are for coaches' wives. They can vent a lot of their frustration at their husband, at the game, and at the way it's going by blaming it on the officials.

Lage: But if they don't enjoy the game, I think it would really be a terrible life.

Newell: Oh, I know. It would be a terrible life. There wouldn't be any kind of a retribution, because her husband, he's no walk in the park. As I say, an emotionally immature guy that more often than not is overly impressed with the fact that he's coaching or something like that, and a bigger head case than the kids in a lot of ways. I have a lot of respect for coaches' wives. The only ones I really don't cotton to are the ones that try to be Mrs. Coach.

Lage: The second coach, assistant coach?

Newell: Yes, and start to try to exert an influence about the assistant coach where probably the influence is colored by the fact she doesn't like the assistant coach's wife or something. That happens, where the head coach's wife starts to pontificate on who her husband should have helping him, or should trust, or all that, without really knowing what she's talking about. And most of it colored because maybe she doesn't like the wife of the assistant coach, or she doesn't like the assistant coach, period.

Lage: Yes. That probably happens in every field.

Newell: Oh, sure. Sure it does.

Race in Basketball

Lage: I'm going to move us along a little bit. So often the question of race and how race has influenced basketball comes up. We have talked about it sort of tangentially, but just in terms of your scouting and player decisions, do the owners or the managers--do they or did they--consider race in making player personnel decisions?

Newell: No. There was a time when I'm sure it had input in the NBA, before I came in, I think. Not that my coming in had anything to do with it; I don't mean that. I mean I think the period prior to that, there was more of a--and it was true in college. For instance, when I went to the Big Ten in 1950, there was only one black player in the league, a kid named Garrett for Indiana. When I left four years later, there were more black players, but not that many more. It was in a transition period where now the black player was coming in.

And of course, the change in the play of the game had a lot to do with the emergence of the black player in the league. But there was an old saying that white coaches would say among themselves--not all white coaches, but some, "Well, he plays three blacks at home, four on the road, five if he's behind." It was not really a slap at the black player, although it was interpreted as a slap at the black player. It's really more of a positive for a black player, because they want more black players when they get in trouble. The road is harder to win than at home, so you wanted to have more black players.

But it was kind of a truism in some ways, with some coaches. I told you that during my first year at Cal I had a lot of--I don't know how many, but I had a negative reaction from some of the people because three starters on my freshman team were black.

I told you this. We didn't have many black athletes at Cal. And it was understandable. First, we didn't have housing. We didn't have housing for anybody, black or white, but it was much more difficult for a black student, boy or girl, to get housing.

Lage: Off-campus housing?

Newell: Yes. Some of the boarding houses--in fact, I was very upset at this, and I registered a protest, that in some of those houses near campus, if you had a black athlete you were trying to find a place for, they'd say they had no vacancies. They did this to me a couple of times, and so I got a coach to take over a white player, and they had a vacancy. I reported it to the university housing committee, and they took that house off their approved housing. But many of the black athletes had to live a little distance from the college, from the university.

And the same was true of the women students. So all these things worked against having many black co-eds, many black athletes, and just students, black students.

Cal had almost no university dormitories; the fact was that there just weren't accommodations. UCLA had dormitories down there, and they had no problem. So you couldn't even compete with them for a black athlete. The reason we got Earl Robinson was that he was from Berkeley, he lived at home. He was a real quality athlete in high school, and certainly in college, and in professional ball when he went into professional ball. But even he wasn't going to go to Cal, because there weren't black women there, so a lot of guys didn't want to go. And because there weren't a lot of guys there, women didn't want to go, because they wanted social contact, too. It was very difficult to have much of a social relationship if there aren't many students, men for the co-eds, co-eds for the men.

Lage: So you were in a transition period.

Newell: Yes, in a transition. In fact, Kerr was the chancellor then, and he put me on that housing committee. Not that I had anything to do with it; I really didn't. But this was when the initial plans were made to build the dorms, and God, I was happier than hell to see that.

Lage: Was the racial problem something that was mentioned in discussing the need for university dorms?

Newell: No. Well, not as I recall, Ann, other than I may have used it as an example of what I'd run into. The head of the university housing office--I forget her name, but she was a great lady [Ruth Donnelly, housing supervisor]--was really helpful, and she was on this committee, too. I'd talk with her on this problem, and she's the one that really got it squared away.

It was really kind of restrictive--the number in those days, Ann, of black students on the campus was something like forty-eight or fifty-two, something like that, and that included graduate school too. Those figures are just off the top of my head, but they are close. I was very conscious of

it, because I'm competing with UCLA in recruiting, and I don't have a chance with the black athlete from out of the Bay Area. Not a chance.

Lage: And then USF, too, was able to recruit black basketball players.

Newell: Well, USF, yes. But I'm talking about down south. We did get, of course, one kid from Fresno that was on that freshman team, and then another kid from Jefferson High School, but it was tough.

Lage: Now, what about in the NBA, since you've been helping make player decisions? Is race something that is considered? Do they want a balance on the team or--?

Newell: No, no. As I say, that may have happened before I came in, but I came in '68. By that time, they had already gone through that phase of change, of adjustment. No, I've never, ever been conscious of any racial quota. Hell, Franklin [Mieuli] had all--the only guy he had that was white for a long time when other teams didn't have many blacks was Rick Barry.

Lage: Well, that's interesting, because that always seems to come up. And then, of course, the style-of-play question always comes up in discussions of race in basketball.

Newell: See, the change in the game, and the style of game, was not totally because of the emergence of the black player, but it had a lot to do with it, because his athleticism and quickness, speed, brought that part of the game to a much higher level. Because you had more of that, you played a faster brand game, because they were able to compete at that speed without losing anything. Where prior to that, when it was white-dominated, the game didn't have the same athleticism.

Lage: The quickness and--

Newell: The quickness and the pure agility and graceful movement of--I remember Joe Caldwell and people like that, the great athleticism that they had, the ability to do things in the air that you couldn't even dream of doing.

So this did dictate the change in the game, but the danger in the game now--just as an aside though I think it's important--is that with the positives they brought to basketball from this athleticism and some of the other things that cause coaches to be more creative, from the playgrounds, we're also getting some negative things now. The trash talking. We have these players: "Well, that's my game, trash talking." Well, are we going to bring our game of basketball down to that guy's level? Is that what he's trying to

tell us? I don't think so. If he wants to play basketball, play basketball the way it's supposed to be played. You play it, you don't talk it.

Lage: But you have told me stories about some guys in the early years, an Irish kid at USF you told me about, who sounded like he was a superb trash talker.

Newell: Oh, that was [Jack] Hanley, but that was just an instance.

Lage: That was just one instance? That wasn't a continual--?

Newell: Yes. That was a kind of intimidation, but not this stuff that they talk now--in your face and all that.

Lage: That really becomes an integral part of the game, it seems.

Newell: Well, it has, but it's not an integral part of the white man's game. But some of these white players picked it up now. And a lot of the black players don't like it either. There's nobody that's more upset with this trash talk than Wayne Embry, and he's publicly stated it. A lot of the fights that have started have been the result of the trash talking creating this antagonism, one toward the other. No, those earlier instances I told you about were psychological instances where, "If you run into my elbow, I'm going to deck you," that kind of a thing. But that was a little different. This is standing over a guy and belting and yelling at him. Like one player did to Ewing. That is what's going to cause a fight, that kind of stuff.

Lage: Do you think they'll get that under control?

Newell: Absolutely. No way that they're not going to. There's just too much anti-trash talking, and there should be. There's no room in the game for that. There's no room. But it's up to the officials. They're starting to crack down on a lot of these things. They did something the other day at the foul line that--well, you have ten seconds after they give you the ball to get your shot off, and if you don't get it off, it's a violation, the other team gets the ball. Now, some of these guys, they prance and preen and they do all that stuff, just like they were doing that stuff in the end zone in football. It was really the black culture, really, that brought this in. When it was white-dominated, you never saw any of that stuff.

But if you've got a lot of black players playing, you certainly have to take into consideration a lot of the things that are more native to them. You have to accept some of them--not all of them. But you've got to accept it to a point. It can't be more important than the game, and it can't be something that could be interpreted as putting the other team or other player down. And that is where they draw the line, where they go in there and they do

things that make another player look bad, and then that starts a fight with that player.

Lage: You were telling about something that happened on the foul line?

Newell: Well, this player got to the foul line, and he didn't get it off in ten seconds. He's up, he's looking, he's carrying on. They blew the whistle and called a violation.

They did the same in baseball the other day. A batter--some of these guys get out of the batter's box after every pitch and stand over and go through the same routine, which is ridiculous. You're not supposed to do that. You're supposed to be in that box so many seconds, and a liberal amount of time. But there's always some guys that are going to test everything. This guy didn't get back into the box--he had two strikes on him, and didn't get back in there, and he'd been warned. The umpire called, "Strike three, you're out." And the guy's still out there rubbing and going through all this stuff. Of course, a big argument ensued.

Lage: That will make changes in the game.

Newell: Well, it sure should. I think that's a good call. I think it's a good call at the foul line. Because all it does, you get one guy there twelve seconds, you're going to get a guy at fifteen. And then you're going to get a guy at twenty. The games are too long anyway without any action going on, so why should you stand there and watch some guy, because the camera's on, go through all these routines? I mean, he's probably telling his friends, "Watch what I do at the foul line this time." As I say, you can take some of this stuff, but you don't have to take the whole baggage.

Preparing the Japanese Basketball Team for the 1964 Olympics

Lage: We also wanted to talk more about Japan today. Tell me how you first got involved in Japan. That goes back a ways.

Newell: Yes. I first became involved in the 1960 Olympics, in Rome. I met a Mr. Uyeda, Yoshimi Uyeda. He was one of the top people in JABBA, Japanese Amateur Basketball Association. The 1964 Olympics was to be in Tokyo. Because they were in Tokyo, and Japan was the host country, automatically their basketball team qualified, because that's the way it is in the Olympics. The home country's basketball team always is an automatic qualifier. And Japan had never won an Olympic game.

Lage: And you had played them in '60.

Newell: Well, this is '60 I'm talking about now. I'm talking about 1960, at the Olympics. They had never won a game. Their basketball program was not very good. They were very, very worried, as I found out, about being embarrassed, losing face, in the '64 Olympics in Tokyo if they were being routed by every team badly. As it turned out in Rome, the only game that they won was a forfeit. Bulgaria, I think, didn't show up. But they had never really won a game, and they were beaten very, very badly in many, many games. So this was a real concern.

Lage: Why did they come to you?

Newell: They came to me because America is where you go--especially at that time--if you're going to try to find the best in basketball, the latest in basketball. So they asked me if I would help them prepare for the 1964 Olympics, and would I consider being kind of a consultant for them. I said, "Well, let me think about it. I've just taken over the athletic directorship, I'm out of coaching. I'm not sure what my total responsibilities will be as an athletic director. Until I have a better idea of that, I can not commit myself to anything like this."

Then I was in correspondence with Mr. Uyeda. He came to the States, and I met with him. At that time, I said, "Well, I can help you prepare." I told him how. "First, you send the coaches, your head coach and your assistant coach, and you send them to the States. Give me an opportunity and time to set up a schedule for them, and I will see that they will be able to observe many if not all of our top programs in this country in basketball and sit down with the coaches, and be able to understand why the coaches do what they're doing, and increase their knowledge of what they have to do to prepare Japan."

So I did. I got them everywhere. I'd call the coaches, and they were all very, very cooperative. The assistant coach, Hiroshi Saito, understood some English. He was a bright guy. In fact, he's one of the top guys in Nippon Mining, one of the biggest industrial companies in all of Japan, and internationally they're very big, too. He later became a very, very good friend of Bobby Wendell [a member of Cal's 1959 team], because he was the head of NIMIC, which is in the San Jose area. He was the president there. They were an offshoot of Nippon Mining, and he became a good friend of Bobby's. He and his wife and Bobby and his wife, the families.

So anyway, they went back to Japan, and they had a lot of information, but it was just mish-mash. So many contradictions in what they had heard, but at least they saw programs and saw the way the

coaches taught, and how they organized and all that. But that's what I wanted them to see. There was a certain consistency in what they saw, but there was a lot of conflicting and contradictory technical stuff.

Lage: A lot of approaches and--

Newell: Yes, they learned just enough to get confused. [laughs] But I expected that.

So when they came back, then I said, "Now, you bring your team over here." They were going to go to the World Games in Brazil. I said, "You bring your team over in April"--the World Games, I think, were in May. We took them to the school for the blind [on Derby Street in Berkeley, now the Clark Kerr campus]. We used that gym for about two weeks. They stayed at the Berkeley YMCA, and I had Rene and Stu Inman from San Jose, the San Jose coach, really do the teaching. I was not able to spend much time with them myself at that time, except I would get in on the practices and sit down with Rene and meet with them after practices and all that.

But they really did most of the teaching and coaching there, and putting it together. We would talk every day about what they needed to have them do the next day. So it was really good, because they really started to condense things for them, zero in and change the personnel, made them see that some of the personnel they were playing they were playing for the wrong reasons, in other words. It really helped.

They had a little more size than they had had. They had some younger players that had some size, and one player that was an excellent player, turned out to be maybe the greatest player they've ever had. He later became one of the top coaches there.

But then they went to Brazil, and I went with them for about ten days to Brazil.

Lage: Was this '62?

Newell: Sixty-two. Yes. It was the World Games. They did pretty good over there. But there were some things that they were doing, but they didn't understand why they were doing them, and as a result, they weren't doing them very well. I was able to make a lot of changes with them in Brazil, and to learn the personnel better. I spent a lot of time with the coaches, and it turned out to be a real productive time in terms of, when they went back to Japan, what they did.

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Newell: Then in 1963 I went over to Japan, and I really concentrated on the defense. I was really pleased, because at the conclusion of the 1964 Olympics, Coach Henry Iba, an American gold-medal-winning coach, said Japan had the best defense of any of the teams in the Olympics. They won five games and they got beat at a ball-in-the-air buzzer by a team that was supposed to be a lot better, I forget what team it was. The Russians only beat them four points, but they had a guy seven-foot-four, and the Japanese didn't have anybody even close to him, and this guy was just standing around the basket, just playing volleyball really. There was nothing they could do, because they had nobody even close to being able to--he just raised his hands, and he was almost up to the ring. So this was really good.

Lage: What a turnabout!

Newell: Yes, it was. But you see, what happened was, before the '64 games, I told them, "This is what I want you to do. I want you to let me bring over some American players," mostly players that played for me at Cal. "We'll prepare, we'll spend a month over here with you and we'll prepare. I want you particularly to learn how to play against a shot blocker. I'll have one of the best shot blockers that you'll see in the Olympics," better than anybody probably, which was Imhoff.

So I brought over Imhoff, Earl Shultz, Tandy Gillis, Bobby Wendell, Wally Torkells, and Bob Wueste--those guys can tell you. You can ask them about this Japanese trip. Then I had a kid from SC who was an All-American with SC that I knew was over in one of those Asian countries, and he came from there and joined us. I think I had seven players. We just prepared Japan every day. I was teaching them to be tough. They were too polite. It got to the point--it was really funny--it got to the point where they started to knock us down, and all my guys were getting a little upset. [laughter] And of course, I'm coaching them, so I'm telling them, "Knock 'em down, knock 'em down."

Tandy had always had this short fuse. They knocked him down on something, and he gets a little upset, but he doesn't get as upset as he normally would. So after the practice, I tell the American players all, "Now, I'm just telling you one thing. I'm telling them I want them to really get rough and aggressive, and the only way they can get that way is to practice it. I don't want you to get mad. Now, the first guy that gets mad and retaliates, he's going to be on a plane going back to San Francisco by that evening, so just remember that." Well, that was enough, because they were having a great time over there, and they loved it. They look at each other, and they look at Tandy, "Tandy, now don't you get mad." They didn't say it, but it was--.

So we didn't have any trouble. Then they became great friends, the Japanese players really appreciated what our kids did, and our guys were great ambassadors. I left Bobby Wendell over there, and he stayed over for the Olympics. I had to come back to Cal. He stayed over for the Olympics.

Lage: Did they have their own coach, and you were assisting the coach?

Newell: Oh, yes, they had their own coach. Yoshii was the head coach, and Saito was his assistant.

Lage: So Wendell stayed over there--

Newell: He would reinforce the things, because he played for me all those years. He'd reinforce them, what I'd been teaching. The problem is, you get everything squared away and teach them, and you leave, and then they go back to the old habits. There isn't anybody to correct them. Well, Bobby stayed there and did a real good job.

Lage: And after that experience they won the five games?

Newell: During that Olympics, yes, after the work that these players gave them, yes, they won the five games. And from that time on--. And Mr. Uyeda, he's one of the top pearl dealers in Japan, and he has a store in the Imperial Hotel there in Tokyo. He's not active in basketball any more. He's eighty-eight years old now, I believe, but up until about five years ago, he represented Japan in all these international meetings and that. He was their representative, a wonderful man. Former player, a little guy, great guy. I still see him when I go to Japan.

And it's been a wonderful relationship for me, because it's something I've told you before, Ann. You do things for the right reason, and you don't do it for money. To do things for money, I think, most times is the wrong reason. Not always, but most of the time. I never have ever taken pay from them, I never would.

Lage: Did they pay expenses for your players and all?

Newell: The first couple of years I went over there, it cost me money. It created a little strain, because coaches didn't make much money to begin with, and we didn't have any of these ancillary things, shoe contracts or anything like that. So it was a little strain, but it didn't cost me that much. I just wasn't able to do much, because they put me in a hotel, and they thought I'd eat all my meals there. Well, you get tired in a little hotel. The hotel they put me at--they didn't have any money. Those kind of things really don't bother me

as much probably as they should, but I understood. I was more interested in trying to help them than I was in any personal comfort or discomfort.

The room I was in, I swear--when they put me in bigger rooms now, I have a bigger clothes closet now than that first hotel room. But I never would take money. They give me a liberal per diem when I go over there now, but things are so much more expensive now than they ever were.

Understanding Cultural Differences in Japan

Lage: What kind of cultural differences did you notice? Did you have to change your style at all to work with the Japanese players and coaches?

Newell: Yes. You see, one of the big problems originally I would have in Japan, and any American coach has in going to any country, is to better understand the culture of that country. Now, one of the problems in teaching for a gaijin or anybody other than a Japanese, and maybe even a Japanese teacher, is I would explain something, and it's very important when you're teaching that you explain the thing properly so it's understood. You have to put it in the simplest of language, and as concise as you can make it, so you don't waste a lot of words.

Well, I would tell a player, "Now, I want you to do it this way." And my interpreter--I had some awful interpreters in those days. Every now and then, I'd get a real good one, but I'd get some real bad ones too. Because the Japanese didn't have any idea who could speak English and who couldn't, if they didn't speak themselves. So anybody that spoke English they thought was a good interpreter.

We tell a classic story: Forddy Anderson was a coach that I brought over with me, a very, very fine offensive coach. This one manager we had, he always liked to practice his English on us. But he was funny. He had this school-room English and had no idea what the words were a lot of times.

So he's trying to make conversation with me one time, and Forddy's over here, I'm here, and he's here. This was the first year Forddy had been over there, and I had been over there before, as I say, teaching them before. He says to me, "Coach, you very big man, very important man in Japan." And I forget what his name was, Seiko or something. I said, "Seiko-san, why do you say that?" "Everybody know Coach Peter Anderson."

[laughter] We still talk about that. Forddy Anderson was there and he said, "Everybody know Coach Peter Anderson." [laughter]

I want to tell you: Bobby Wendell was there, ask him about Coach Peter Anderson. Bobby just fell apart. He rolled down the stairs--we were in some shrine or temple, going through it, and he just rolled over. And Forddy, we still talk about it, what, forty years later we talk about that, "Coach Peter Anderson."

But anyway, to get back to my point: so they would say, "Hai, hai," which is "yes," and then they'd make the same mistake. It really was starting to bother me, because I know they're not dumb. So we had one kid that was a little older and spoke some English. He could see that I was getting a little upset because of the repeat of the mistake. And when I'd say, "Do you understand," they would say, "Hai."

He said, "Peter-san." They all called me Peter-san over there. "Peter-san, he say hai because Japanese player don't like to say repeat. Because if they say that, it may tell you that they don't think you good teacher, that you don't explain right, or it may cause you to think that they're dumb, because they don't understand. So they say hai, which takes care of everything, except they don't understand." [laughter]

Lage: So he explained to you--

Newell: Yes. So then, that was great. And then it gave me an opportunity, and I had him do it. I said, "I'm going to speak very slowly to you. I want you to explain exactly what I'm saying." When I'm talking to the team, I said, "I want you to understand this: that I'm talking now as an American, like I'm talking to American players, and this is the way I would talk, and these are the reasons I would talk that way. The reasons would be, I would expect the American player to say, 'I don't understand, Coach.' That is easy for me to accept. Now it gives me an opportunity to maybe explain it in another way so he will understand. I do not think that he is dumb, or I don't think that maybe I don't explain it right. It's just that he doesn't understand it this way, so I as a coach must understand that he doesn't understand, and try another way."

"You as a player, you have to understand that there is no reflection on your intelligence if you don't understand. There is no reflection on the teacher that he can't teach because you don't understand. It is just that you have to make it more understandable by another direction. It's very important that when I tell you something, you understand. Now, it may be I have to use three approaches, but you must never think that it's because you don't have intelligence, or that I'm a bad teacher. You should never

think that way. You should understand, and if you don't understand, you always tell Peter-san, 'I don't understand.' If I have to take five times, I will try it each time a different way. But that does not mean that you're dumb, that you don't have a good mind. Maybe I could explain it better. But I need to know, because we both have to be on the same--" I forget what word, but we say "the same page."

And from then on, I had no problem. And to this day, when they don't understand, "Peter-san, I don't understand." Or the coach will tell me, "I don't understand." So let me try it another way.

Lage: So that was a lasting communication--

Newell: Yes, absolutely. And it really taught me something very important, that you have to understand the culture and the customs and habits of a country, and that is one in Japan--and in business they have this problem all the time with Japanese. They don't want to convey to their foreign friend or their foreign business associate that they're not understanding what he's saying. But if you're going to worry about that, and you allow him to believe that you do understand, you could be making a big, big mistake. So every country is different. You just can't invoke American thinking on all of them. But you can explain why you do it in America, and what the American response would be.

Politics and Self-Interest in Japanese and American Basketball

Lage: Have you gone back to Japan every year since then?

Newell: Practically, yes. I go back sometimes twice. I may be going in the end of August this year, and again in October.

Lage: Have you seen continuing changes?

Newell: Oh, yes, and a lot of times not for the better. There's a lot of political--much more political things.

Lage: When we met last time, you got a call about their appointing an American coach.

Newell: Yes, this American coach.

Lage: Did that go through?

Newell: Yes, and they're having an awful problem.

Lage: That's too bad. So what role will you have when you go back?

Newell: Not with the national group. About three years ago, I prepared a young national team for the youth Asian competition championship, and it was in Nagoya. I didn't go to Nagoya with them, but I prepared them. Fortunately, it was the first time they've ever won the youth championship in all of Asia. First championship they've won in basketball in a long time. They used to win, but their program is so fragmented now that it's beyond my comprehension. There's too much politics going on, and I--

Lage: So it's widespread, this political thing.

Newell: Yes. It's something that I don't like to have happen, but it's there and there's nothing I can do about it. They're going to have to--the people that I know like Uyeda and so many of the people that worked many hours for Japanese basketball in JABBA did it for Japan and for Japanese basketball. Now I see more self-serving people, for the power, and for being able to go to different countries as the representative of Japan basketball, and an ego thing. But not for Japan. Not for basketball.

Lage: Is basketball as a sport very important in Japan?

Newell: No, it isn't nearly as important as it should be. And a good part of that is they've never had enough direction from the top, from JABBA, to concentrate on the television. They're practically nonexistent in television. The NBA is big in Japan, absolutely big. American college basketball is big.

Lage: United States basketball gets on TV?

Newell: Yes, they have the NBA games on over there. It's very, very big, and even college basketball. They bring over college teams all the time. They have the capacity for having very good basketball. This recent thing about the American coach is just another example of why they've regressed rather than gone forward. They haven't progressed at all in the last four or five years. They've gone down and down. They're, I think, seventh place in Asia now, and they used to be one and two. Before China, they were number one most of the time. After China, they were two, sometimes three.

But it's like ownership in the NBA: if it's weak at the top, it's going to be weak at the bottom. They have too many self-serving people. They've got college coaches, they've got college people in there with a lot of power, and the idea of having the power, again, for self-interest, the self-interest being that if they can dictate the selection of the Olympic team or the world

team, there's more opportunity to get kids to go to your school. That kind of a self-interest thing. I've never heard of that before.

Lage: When did you get that award from the emperor? I want to be sure we get this on tape.

Newell: I'm not sure the year, 1987, right in there.

Lage: "The Order of the Sacred Treasure."

Newell: Yes.

Lage: So that would reflect to me that someone in Japan considers basketball pretty important.

Newell: I was the first person in basketball to ever get it, either Japanese or anyone else.

Lage: I'm told that you are only the second American to ever get it, and the other was Mike Mansfield [U.S. senator, who served as ambassador to Japan.]

Newell: Is that right? I didn't know that.

Lage: In what other countries have you taught? I know you've been to China and Israel.

Newell: No, no, just going over observing. I've gone to Mexico, Guatemala, Australia (1992 and 1996).

Lage: Just observing, or--

Newell: Well, going over and holding clinics, in those countries. Korea and Taiwan. Of course, I've been to China, but only with the Japanese team. I've never had clinics there.[1]

Lage: How do these things get arranged, your giving clinics in foreign countries?

Newell: Well, they write, call me all the time. In fact, I've been contacted by Italy and by Turkey to take my Big Man Camp over there, but I can't do it this

---

[1]In 1996 I worked with China's men's Olympic and future Olympians big men. I also held clinics for their coaches. Also I worked with their Olympic women's team, which is ranked number three in the world--PFN.

year. I've gone to Italy and had a Big Man Camp over there, along with clinics. They wanted me to go again, and the same thing in Turkey, but I don't want to do that much traveling.

Lage: Keeps you pretty busy.

Newell: Oh, yes. Sure.

Teaching Clinics for Women's Basketball

Lage: Now, how about women's basketball? Let's just be sure we cover what you have done there.

Newell: Well, those two years. I told you about that. I was invited by the women's Olympic basketball group, USA Basketball--Lynn Barry is head of it. She's invited me for two years, for the past two years, to hold what they call the premier women's camp. They invite fifteen women from all over the country that are six-five and over.

Lage: So these are the big women.

Newell: Yes. So I've been involved in that for two years. This particular year I'm not, because they're having competition--in fact, we're just a step away from the women's championship. I think we're in the final four right now, and we won last night. But those camps were to get ready for the Olympics in Atlanta. It was the first time they'd ever had a program like this, and it really went over good, because the girls liked it and USA Basketball liked it.

I had about eighty-five to ninety women's coaches--some of them were men--at my first clinic. The second one was not so large; there was a conflict with a national meeting they had for women coaches, at another place.

Lage: Are there many changes that you have to make in your approach for women's basketball?

Newell: No, I teach them the same things I teach the NBA players, and some of the things they do better. [laughter] The same things. They're very, very receptive, and it's fun teaching them. I really enjoyed it. I would have done it this year if their schedule had permitted. I don't know about next year; if they have it again, and I'm able, I'll do it again next year. I enjoyed working with--I had Ann Donovan, who's the assistant, and she's just a wonderful

lady and is going to be a real good head coach, a very good student of the game, and has had great playing experience. Also Anne Meyers Drysdale, who is an excellent teacher and one of the great women players.

Lage: Do any of the women coaches resent having a man come and tell them how to do it?

Newell: I don't know. I know most of the top women coaches, one of my real good friends is at Stanford.

Lage: Tara VanDerveer.

Newell: Yes. She and I are basketball buddies from way back.

Lage: She used to study Bobby Knight, I understand.

Newell: Yes, she went to Indiana. I've gone down for years and watched her programs, and when I had my Big Man Camp at Stanford, every day we'd go have lunch and talk about what we were doing and all, practically. And I still do, I go down there to see her, and we usually have lunch. I talk with her team. So I've seen a great advancement in women's basketball, great advancement.

Lage: Do you like watching the games?

Newell: Yes, because I see the progress. I see the game progressing like I saw our game progressing. The skills improved, the technique improved, the coaching improved. I see all those things.

Lage: How about the athleticism of the women athletes?

Newell: Well, I see more of that. I see a girl like Lisa Leslie, her athleticism is, in women's basketball, almost like a Michael Jordan is in men's basketball. She's six-five, and she's so graceful, she plays with a grace like Jordan did, Joe Caldwell, those people, or Julius Erving. They played with a grace and a body control that I'm sure would be the envy of all these dance instructors, interpretive dance instructors and that. In fact, I told her the first time, I said, "If you ever realize how good a player you can become, you're just going to be the best, the greatest. Don't ever put yourself down in terms of your ability." She had a tendency to be hard on herself, and expect everything to come out just so, and she wouldn't get on other people, she'd get on herself, hang her head a little. I saw this great, great talent, and a wonderful young lady.

And I told her that. She was player of the year this year in women's basketball. She's worth going out to watch play, as far as I'm concerned. I'd go pay to see her play, just to see the grace that she plays. She's the epitome of what basketball is supposed to be.

Continuing the Cal Connection, and Further Thoughts on the 1959 Team

Lage: We haven't talked on tape about any continuing relation you might have with Cal. Do you have a continuing relation?

Newell: I'm very, very pleased at the selection they made for athletic director [John Kasser]. As you can see, all my players here feel like I do, that it's really a very, very important decision they made, and a very proper decision they made as far as we're concerned. We reflect pretty much the Cal support groups, and the various communities.

Lage: Yes, he seems a real popular--

Newell: Yes, and many of my players know him, one of them was the best man at his wedding.

Lage: Really?

Newell: Oh, yes. Wally Torkells. They've been real close friends. That's the great thing about it: Kasser has been real good friends, close friends, to so many of my players, and he coached down there in Southern California. It isn't that so much as we know we've got one of our people in there. In fact, I told him, I didn't really go to any games last year up there, because I just was so upset at the way this other thing was handled, there was so much intrigue--

Lage: The Lou Campanelli thing. [The mid-season firing of Cal basketball coach Lou Campanelli in 1993.]

Newell: Yes. And so many un-Cal-like things happened that it really bothered me. People behind the scenes controlling things that I never was conscious of during the many years I was connected with Cal.

But I think John Kasser is going to do an excellent job, as long as they don't start to manipulate behind him. He's been around enough, and I think that the people that were responsible for his being there will see that he has the opportunity to do the job that needs to be done at Cal. Because other

people made the other decision, and you saw how wrong it was, and the people that helped make it wrong that are still there, but I don't think they're going to be involved to the extent that they were.

No, I'm personally very pleased, because John has been in the Cal system at Santa Barbara, and he knows--

Lage: Knows how the university works.

Newell: Yes, Stan Morrison is another of my team who was with him.

Lage: Well, Stan was a candidate for the job, too.

Newell: Sure. But Stan will tell you that there's nobody any more happy than Stan to see him there. I had met him, but I really didn't know him that well, but then when my players started to tell me about him, and all of them, Earl and all of them, jeez, they just went overboard when they found out that he was one of the final candidates.

Lage: Oh, that's good. I'm glad to hear it.

Newell: Yes. I'm very, very pleased, very pleased. And Stan wants to coach. He's a coach, Stan's a coach. The very fact he took that job that nobody would take [at San Jose State University], and the fact he's done what he's done, shows he is a coach.

And he should be coaching, because he has a true regard and feeling for youth, for young men. I think his influence on the players that play for him is going to be very, very substantial in the rest of their life and in helping them make right decisions for the rest of their life. Those kind of people should stay in coaching. I've never measured the success of a coach by what he's won, but more by what he's produced and turned out.

Lage: Well, I think this team here [at the 1959 Cal team reunion], then, is a good testament to you.

Newell: Well, it is. It's the greatest--it isn't just the championship, but it's just that here, thirty-five years later--I told you this before, Ann. I think the greatest accolade a coach could have is that being a part of his team while they were undergraduates was one of the real good experiences they had during their undergraduate life. Not the only thing: if that was the only thing, then I'd think it's like anything that's overdeveloped in one area, it would be kind of a monstrous thing. But they were all students, and they all graduated, and they all went into their various fields. Some are doctors, some are lawyers, businessmen. But there's not one of them out there that is talking about all

the money he has, or how successful he is. God help him if he ever even started to pontificate in any of that stuff, the rest of them would just tear him apart. And that's always been the way.

But that, to me, is--hell, let's face it, if you win a championship like that, it's something the rest of your life that you're proud of and reminded of and all, and it's a good reminder. But it would be empty if you did it and the players that played were not even interested in seeing each other, didn't want to have anything to do with the school; it was not a good experience. I don't give a damn how many championships you won if there wasn't a pride and a respect for each other. To me, it would be empty.

Lage: Well, that is a good thought to bring this interview to a close.

Transcriber: Shannon Page
Final Typist: Shana Chen

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INTERVIEWS WITH RICHARD DOUGHTY AND TANDY GILLIS, AND ROBERT DALTON

Interview conducted in 1994
by Ann Lage

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Interview History--Robert Dalton, Richard Doughty, Tandy Gillis

The final interview session of the Pete Newell oral history was conducted at Quail Lodge in Carmel Valley during the thirty-fifth reunion of Pete's NCAA championship team of 1959. After we finished our session, Pete urged me to record some of the recollections of his team members, and several were happy to participate, despite the great number of competing activities at the Quail Lodge reunion.

I recorded brief interviews with Bob Dalton and then with Dick Doughty and Tandy Gillis. Then I was invited to join other team members on the golf course, where I spoke with Denny Fitzpatrick, Darrall Imhoff, Ed Donahue, and Bob Wendell as we rode across the greens in a golf cart. Their recollections were playful, yet thoughtful, and give some fine examples of Pete Newell's coaching style, his relationship with his team members, as well as the lifelong impact Pete Newell and the NCAA experience have had on the 1959 team. Unfortunately, the shorter "golf cart" interviews were of poor sound quality and were difficult to transcribe, but the patient listener can consult the draft transcript and the tapes placed in the Bancroft Library as supplementary material to the Pete Newell oral history.

Bob Dalton, Dick Doughty, and Tandy Gillis reviewed the transcripts of their interviews, making only minor corrections. We thank them for their cooperation.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

March 1997

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APPENDIX A

Interview with Richard L. Doughty and Tandy Gillis, Cal Basketball Team of 1959

[Date of Interview: June 11, 1994] ##

Lage: Let's begin with introductions.

Gillis: I'm Tandy Gillis, and I'm from Long Beach, California.

I was interested in playing basketball somewhere, but my mom had written to a bunch of schools on the West Coast, and somebody from Cal, as well as Stanford, and eventually UCLA, contacted me. I was invited to fly up, and I flew up and met Earl Shultz and Jim [Bootenshine Barrons?], that's here [at Cal?]. They were up there, and we went up for a weekend, and I was shown around the campus and met Rene Herrerias.

Lage: Did you talk to Pete?

Gillis: Oh, yes, I talked to Pete. I just thought this is where I want to go, and this is the kind of person that I wanted to play for.

Lage: Did he explain his program, or tell you about the school?

Gillis: Both. I didn't know Pete Newell from anything. John Wooden was at UCLA, and they had a scheduled trip to go there in two weeks just to talk to them, and I canceled it. My mom was a UCLA grad, but I just liked the school and I really liked Pete and Rene, and just thought this is where I want to go to school. That's the extent of it.

Then I played that spring, after I decided that I was going to go up there, for Stu Inman, who later was the general manager of the Portland Trailblazers. He was coaching at Orange Coast College, which is where I coach now--I've been there for eighteen years--well, he had Denny Fitzpatrick playing on his junior college team. I drove down there twice a week, played with their team, and then that summer played in a summer league that was run by Bob Boyd, the eventual SC coach, and played with these older guys, older Korean War veterans.

Lage: This was before you came to Cal?

Gillis: The summer before I came to Cal, in 1956, I played with them. Pete came down and watched the game, and talked to my father, and that was it. So I ended up going to Cal. It was only because of, I guess, my mom writing these letters, and somebody from Cal came and watched me play. It wasn't even Pete. Then Pete hooked me up with Stu Inman, and I guess Stu said, "Hey, this guy's okay, he can play," I guess.

I didn't play very good as a freshman in those days, and I never even got to travel as a sophomore. I played defense every day, every day my whole sophomore year. I never got to play offense.

Lage: This is in practice?

Gillis: In practice.

Lage: So you were the one they practiced against?

Gillis: The Cannon Fodder Five, we always called ourselves. Those other guys call themselves that, Ned and them, but hell, I'll tell you what: my sophomore year, I never played any offense.

Lage: Did you get discouraged?

Gillis: No. That's just the way it was. You knew as you got older, hopefully you'd get a shot. Right, Dick?

Doughty: Yes, it's totally different.

Lage: Let's introduce Dick here.

Doughty: I'm Dick Doughty, and I was a local boy from Oakland, California, just a few miles away from Berkeley. What Tandy's saying is certainly very true--the difference in the eras is unbelievable in that, at that time, freshmen were ineligible to play. They had to play on a freshman team. It was understood in Pete's system that until you were a junior, you weren't expected to play significant minutes. That was also appropriate, because the system was very complex, and you learned over two years.

One thing Pete could not tolerate was mental errors. He could understand that I could drop a ball, or could dribble a ball off this foot, but if you didn't set the screen you were supposed to set, or if you did not throw the appropriate pass to the appropriate man at the appropriate time, that was unacceptable.

Lage: And how did you deal with that?

Doughty: You learn.

Lage: How did he deal with that, when you made that mental error?

Doughty: Well, if you made the mental error in practice, you got a tongue-lashing. It was just as simple as that, and he was an expert at that particular type of discipline. [laughter] But if you did it in a game, you weren't in the game. As I say, you could miss shots and other kinds of physical things, but if you blew a play--it was supposed to be a double screen and you weren't there to set that screen--he'd have somebody else out there. His system never depended upon individuals and their individual brilliance; it depended upon five people operating in sync and doing everything properly. The system would break down if one guy wasn't doing it right.

It took about two years to get to the point where you were really a part of that machine, the offense that he ran, the disciplined offense. One of the things that he certainly worked on was percentages. The ideal was to get a lay-up every time we had the ball. One of the things I remember that he constantly would emphasize, he would say, "I've never seen the other team score yet when we have the ball." So he didn't mind if we had to go through the patterns three, four, five times, and then start all over again and again and again, until the appropriate shot came up.

Lage: And there was no shot clock.

Doughty: No. Now, this wasn't a stall, understand. He wasn't stalling. He was just saying if we try something, and we don't get a good, high percentage shot, go back and try something else, and have patience.

Gillis: In that, though, we always took more shots than the other team. People always said we held the ball; that was absolutely not the case. They didn't get any more shots because of our defense and our blocking off the boards. But we didn't hold the ball. I'll tell you what--

Lage: You did once for eight minutes.

Gillis: Well, that was before us. That was before us, and that was against a Bill Russell team that--well, they wouldn't come out and play, then you don't play. That was a different thing. But that was before we did, and we never--

Lage: Are you both the same class?

Gillis: No, I'm a year behind him.

Lage: [to Gillis] You're class of '60?

Gillis: Sixty.

Lage: [to Doughty] And you're '59. So that was your senior year, then, the NCAA championship year?

Doughty: Well, I red-shirted a year, so I actually played in '60 also.

Gillis: I'm sorry, you did.

Doughty: I started with a core of freshmen that won the championship in '59, and then I red-shirted a year, and then played three years, so I finished the same year as Tandy.

Gillis: Yes, and we just watched the game where we beat Cincinnati last night. I brought the tape up, and Dick was great, because he-- In those days, we played two nights in a row, Friday and Saturday night. Darrall Imhoff could never play two nights in a row. Dick would come in and play great the next night. It was just an automatic, it was a given. Darrall's going through a funk; out he comes--he was an All-American, gets taken out, and Dick comes in and does a great job. But we were on the same team. We were the same class, but I was a year behind Dick coming into school. Right.

Doughty: Pete's coaching was always a very intellectual approach to the game, like a chess master. One of the other things--there's two facets to everything. One of the things that would happen when we would go through the kind of deliberate offense that I described before was the other team having not had the ball for forty, fifty seconds, would then be very impatient, particularly if they had a big scorer.

I remember playing against some of the top scoring teams, like Oregon State had a fellow named Dave Gambie at that time who was used to scoring thirty points a game. Here it is about eight minutes into the game, and he's only got about four or six points because his team is just not getting the ball that much. So he starts throwing the ball up from all over the place, because he thinks, "My scoring average is going down." We got them totally out of their game.

Lage: And you could see this happening?

Gillis: Oh, yes. Well, yes, we were told.

Doughty: And you see, Pete would predict it would happen, and it did.

Gillis: We were told: "This is what's going to happen," and then the more it happened, the more you believed. That's why in his system, the older guys taught the younger guys. "This is what's going to happen," and it did happen. It just flat did happen. Right, Dick?

Doughty: Oh, yes.

Gillis: It was incredible. And that's another reason why you didn't mind, as a sophomore, not playing, because you could see what was going on with the older guys. Then the older guys got the shot, and it was always fair, and it was never some young sophomore coming in and taking somebody's spot. You had to pay your dues.

Lage: It's so different from today, when a freshman comes in and starts the game.

Gillis: Yes. In some respects, it's ugly, because of the pro contracts and all.

Doughty: Yes, and they leave when they're sophomores.

Gillis: A friend of mine played at Michigan, and just two weeks ago, Michigan got four or five major recruits. He's really upset--and he played two years in pro --because the Michigan coach tells them, "Come here, play just for a year or two," with no mention of graduation or anything, "You're going to play." Now, Indiana doesn't do that. Pete would never have done that. There's just no way.

Doughty: Good point, because that's one of the things about this team, every single player on this team graduated, and it was, I think, a testament to the complete personal approach that Pete and Rene took to basketball. They weren't just concerned about whether we could make a lay-up or be successful on the court. They were really concerned with our development as individuals, and everything that was done--I'd have to say that Pete was first of all an educator, and in the old cliché sense, a developer of character, very much so. There was a tremendous amount of power in that kind of coaching, and I think the success of the people that you see around here thirty-five years later, and the fact that they're all so obviously committed to each other and so on, reflects that molding, character-building priority that he had.

Lage: Did you take things that you learned in this experience on to your life afterwards? Tell a little bit about what you did after you graduated.

Doughty: I think certainly that the idea that you set goals and try to achieve those goals through hard work and energy, that was something that we learned; good things just don't happen by accident, they're planned. And that if you

plan and follow through, they will happen. That was one of the key lessons that I learned from this whole experience there. And that things that you wouldn't have dreamed were possible could happen.

I don't think that any of us in our wildest dreams when we were sophomores thought we were going to win an NCAA championship. We just looked collectively at the talent that we had, and I'm not saying that we didn't respect each other, but we had no Wilt Chamberlain, we had no Elgin Baylor, we had no Oscar Robertson, we had no Jerry West. And with only perhaps one or two exceptions, we were not highly recruited ball players. We were not high school All-Americans or that sort of thing. And yet, when the smoke cleared, we were the last team still standing.

Lage: But it sounds like you really did believe in yourselves.

Doughty: We believed in Pete. I think that's the key--and we became more than would have been possible otherwise, because he made us believe that we could win. He made us believe that if we just listen--every time he called a time out, if we were in trouble, we went into that time out knowing that he had the answer. And we were confident. And the confidence was probably more important than the specific theory that he gave us in the time out. We just said, "Pete will have the answer," and he'd tell us to do something, and we'd go out there and do it, and it would work. Because we believed in him. We just believed that Pete had the answers, and if we just followed what he told us to do, we were going to win.

Lage: Well, he told you, he tells me, that you were going to win the championship, just stick with it. Is that right? I'm turning it over to Tandy now.

Gillis: We did believe in Pete, but we also believed in each other. And the reason all these guys are here is because the high character, and as I told you as we were coming over here, there were an awful lot of good players who came through Cal that weren't on our team, because they couldn't take the whatever.

Lage: I'd like to get that on tape, because it hasn't come out. Everybody didn't sign on.

Gillis: We would weed guys out. If a guy--I will never forget, this one guy came in with a forty-point average from Glendale Junior College. We played half-court with him, and we just knew, McClintock and I knew, that this guy wasn't going to play. So we deliberately banged him and knocked him around to see if he could take it, and he couldn't take it. He always had an excuse. There was no place for people that had excuses with our group.

Lage: So you guys as a group weeded him out.

Gillis: Well, yes, in a lot of respects, that happened. Or you would go--and I'll never forget Dave Stafford. He was a year behind me, but he was a great one-on-one player and a good tough guy. There was a--I can't think of the guy's name, but he came up as a sophomore. "I'll tell you one thing, Gilly," he goes, "that son of a bitch is not going to be ahead of you or I, and you guard him when you're in there, and I'm guarding him when I'm in there in practice, because that guy's not better than us. You know it, and I know it." [laughter] And it happened. That was it. We just went out of our way to shut this guy down. And the guy ended up by quitting.

Lage: He couldn't take it?

Gillis: And definitely didn't get to play, and then the next year didn't come back out. But that's the way it was. We knew certain guys could get it done, and we knew these other guys couldn't get it done, and those guys went by the wayside.

Lage: Did you think when you came to Cal that you had a chance for a championship in three years, four years--three years?

Gillis: Well, after my first year, in the second year when I saw what he did with that team with Don Mackintosh [?] and in the post[?], and they beat Wilt Chamberlain, I'm going, "Whoa. This is something." And ooh, Dalton and Sterling at the forward, and Mackintosh at the center--that wasn't a very good team. And those guys could have won the national championship. They got screwed by an official in the Elgin Baylor and Seattle game in an overtime game. Pete says down the road, this guy got--I can't think of his name, and he would tell you the official's name--he ends up in the NBA, and they drummed him out because he was fixing games.

Lage: Yes, Pete did tell me about that.

Gillis: He told me that he thought that this guy fixed games.

Doughty: One of the things that I think, again getting back to the point I made earlier, I think that Pete believed in us a lot more than we believed in ourselves initially. As I recall in '59, we were no world-beaters the first month of the season. We lost four or five games, and were not much over .500. As a result, we didn't get much respect throughout the season, even though we finished with a very strong winning season.

But that was typical of Pete also, that to him, there were two seasons. There was the pre-season, when we did a lot of traveling and things, and

then there was conference season. He really didn't--don't get me wrong, he hated to lose any game, but he was willing to take chances and find out what players could do before the conference season started. We lost several games because he played guys perhaps a little longer than he would in other circumstances, just to see how they would do in this kind of pressure.

But that was one of the key things to me, was that you always felt that if you worked real hard in practice and played well and this sort of thing, that you had a chance to earn some time in ball games. It wasn't cast in stone; if somebody wasn't doing the job, he'd have somebody else in the ballgame. He didn't hesitate to do that. But when we started out that poorly, Pete never lost confidence in us and continued to talk as though he had nothing else in mind short of at least a Final Four type of thing. We're looking at this, and we're saying, "Well, okay. Let's go." A lot of coaches, you get off to a bad start, and boy, they begin to lose it. They begin to get on the players, and get critical and negative. Positive. We got positive things.

Individually, if I messed up, I'd get some criticism, but it was always positive: "You can do better than that. You're not thinking. If you think, you're going to improve." It was always a type of thing that was, again, the educator in operation. The coaching profession has too few people who are true educators.

Lage: This is something that you perceived at the time?

Doughty: We reacted to it. I don't know if intellectually we could have stated it in these terms at this point, but we reacted to it, and that's what it's all about. As young men, we appreciated that input, and he always treated our intelligence with respect. He wouldn't tell us authoritatively, "Do this, do that." He'd say, "You've got to do this because if you do this, this is what's going to happen. He'd explain why we were doing things in the way that we were doing them, and not simply have us try to memorize some things and do them without understanding, and that's what led to, as Tandy has described, the fact that the players that were juniors and seniors became almost assistant coaches to the sophomores. Because we understood why Pete was doing things--

Lage: You knew the game, Pete's game.

Doughty: That's right. So he didn't even have to be there. We could be down at the other end of the court. He'd divide us into two groups. He could be up at one end working with the first string and some others, and we'd be down at the other end going through the same things. Then we'd be correcting the

younger kids and telling them exactly what Pete told us a year, year and a half before.

Lage: And that builds team feeling, too, I think, involving you in training. [To Gillis] Now, you've gone on to be a coach.

Gillis: Yes.

Lage: Do you take some of Pete's methods with you?

Gillis: Oh, yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I was and have been a very successful basketball coach because of what I learned from Pete. There's just no question about that.

Lage: In terms of dealing with your team, or in terms of strategy, or?

Gillis: Strategy. Well, both. It all intertwines, I think. I could have taken some four-year [college] jobs, and I didn't. But I won a state championship in 1979, with a team that people said that it couldn't happen, and it did. It's all related.

Lage: So you've seen the same--

Gillis: I would stay in touch with Pete and Bobby Knight, and always would pick Pete's brain about this, and what he thought about that. And "How would you have handled this?" He always had time to talk to me about it. There's no question about me being successful as a coach because of Pete. It's so related it's not even funny. It really is. I always try to emulate the way that he did things, because he was the best at it, he really was.

Lage: That's very impressive. One time, I went to interview him, and he must have got six calls that day from people, different walks of life. Some were coaches, sons of coaches or players, his own son--and each one, he just was there for them.

Gillis: Yes, he's got time for them. He really does. He never puts anybody down. He talks to you like you're a real person, and just explains how he thinks that maybe it should be done this way, or maybe do it that way, and then lets you take what you need out of that. I'm talking about basketball now, but it would apply to anything.

Lage: [to Doughty] Ned told me what everybody did, I'm not sure I got it right--did you work with the YMCA? Or do I have you mixed up with somebody else?

Doughty: I worked for the YMCA.

Lage: You've done a lot of work with youth.

Doughty: I've done a lot of work with youth.

Lage: Is that influence--has your experience on the team influenced that, your approach?

Doughty: Certainly it has influenced my approach to everything I do in life. There's no question about that. It would be hard to say, "I do this because of that." They're different venues, and so on. But certainly, I think the commitment to excellence, the concept that if you're going to do something, do it well, or else don't do it at all; when you get off the [basketball] floor, so to speak, that has carried over into everything that I've done. You just can't be around Pete Newell very long without a lot of this rubbing off. I think that all of us would agree that he was certainly among the most if not the most influential man that we had been in contact with.

So again, I can't say--"On March 4, I did this because of--" but the whole approach clearly is highly influenced by his values and the way he approached people and the way he communicated all of these things. They manifest themselves in everything that I did in working with youth and working with my colleagues in the field and so on.

Lage: Any recollections, incidents that are illustrative that you want to put on there? Ned had a few good ones.

Ned: I don't know about that.

Lage: [laughs] If you don't think of anything, that's okay.

Doughty: I don't know where to start. It really is, and in that sense, there are so many to choose among. I just think it was more a cumulative effect than--.

Lage: Now, if you fellows hadn't won the NCAA, would you be meeting? Would you be having reunions?

Doughty: I think each of us would have to think on that one. I believe we would, to tell you the truth. I really believe we would. There would be a bit of a different color to them, but I really believe that we would. I don't think that it was--certainly for me, it wasn't winning that championship that--in fact, I was very surprised by how little that meant even a few years later to me personally. It was a tremendous thing when it happened, but it--I mean, the sun came up the next morning, and the world went on, and so on. We were all very young, reaching the pinnacle in some field at such a young age is a--

Lage: And again, there's sort of an over-achieving--

Doughty: Right. So I think that we would all be very close. Whether we would have a reunion of the nature of this, certainly I don't think we would probably have had the same kind of high profile. For one thing, the press wouldn't be interested in us, and you wouldn't be sitting here interviewing us probably--

Lage: Well, I don't know. It would depend.

Doughty: Yes. But I think that all of us would have stayed close together, and there would have been occasions when we would have gotten together.

Lage: Apparently, Pete's teams from Michigan still get together. [background noise]

Doughty: Even one of his teams from USF got together not very long ago. Again, that's the kind of bonding that doesn't happen by accident. It's a result of the careful approach that the man brought to his profession.

Lage: Yes. Anything you want to add, Tandy? I don't want to keep you guys. But is there any particular incident that you want to recall? I can see you're thinking of something by the expression on your face! [laughs]

Gillis: No! Absolutely not. [laughs]

Lage: Dick Doughty?

Doughty: One of the key differences, I think, from what you see in more recent basketball coaching and Pete's approach was that we always had a squad of between eighteen and twenty-four players involved, with a junior varsity and a varsity, and maybe a couple of players that were there because they loved the game even though they knew they had no realistic chance to get varsity minutes.

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Doughty: Now the squads are usually twelve players, just enough to have two teams out on the court practicing against each other, and the coaches say, "Well, it's too much of a distraction to have a big squad, eighteen, nineteen boys." But the key thing, remember, is that in Pete's case, if he had worked with twelve players, it would be highly likely that someone like a Bob Dalton would not even have been one of those twelve. Because when the season began, he did not look like he was going to be one of the top players. I could name two or three others that probably wouldn't even have made the cut if he was cutting down to ten or twelve.

I just have to wonder how many of these other programs around the country today are cutting players because the coaches have decided that it's too tough for them to work with larger numbers of players, and how many players or potential players have lost the opportunity to develop because the coaches simply don't have the capacity to handle more than a few players.

Lage: And they have a lot more assistant coaches now than there used to be.

Doughty: They have a lot bigger staff now, and more technical assistance and this sort of thing, and still they say it's too unwieldy to have more than ten or twelve players. Pete never had trouble with twenty, twenty-two, and everyone felt that they were getting attention and receiving support and that kind of thing.

Lage: [tape interruption] Pete was telling me today about a bridge game where he taught you a thing or two.

Doughty: Don't remember a thing about it. Sorry.

Lage: [laughs] Shows how people's memories--. He said it took place on the plane coming home from your championship game.

Doughty: No, I don't remember a thing about it.

Lage: Oh, you are putting me on.

Doughty: I lost a lot of respect for Pete over that.

Gillis: Pete and I used to beat Dick, and who did you play with? Fitzpatrick?

Doughty: Fitzpatrick.

Gillis: We used to kick their butt in bridge every plane trip.

Lage: And was it because of <u>your</u> skills?

Gillis: That's why Pete was such a good coach: he recognized talent. [laughter]

Lage: He picked the right partner.

Gillis: He wanted to play against Doughty, no matter what. So he could get the needle in and twist it.

Lage: I think it's wonderful that you remember these things for so long.

Gillis: And if Doughty lost, which was usually _____ [background talking obscures voices]

Doughty: Anybody that would bid three no trump with a singleton in a suit I had bid twice!?

Lage: You do remember it, because--[laughing]

Doughty: Oh, I don't remember a thing about it! [laughter, talk] But just speaking hypothetically, anybody who would do that deserves no respect. [laughter] [tape interruption]

Interview with Robert J. Dalton, Cal Basketball Team of 1959

Lage: Okay, now we're talking to Bob Dalton. Let's start by your saying something about where you came from and why you came to Cal.

Dalton: Well, actually, I had originally planned to go to Stanford. I was a mid-term graduate at San Leandro High School. In my senior year at San Leandro, while I know it's hard to believe, I played football. I was a quarterback. Apparently, I had a fairly good year, and basically I decided to go to Cal and play football.

Lage: And you played tennis too, didn't you?

Dalton: I did play tennis, but not in college. So in any event, I went to Cal on a grant-in-aid to play football, even though I had played basketball all my life. I got there, and I--

Lage: What class were you?

Dalton: It was the class of '59. When I got there, Joe Kapp was there. We came in as freshmen together. I played behind Joe. So just before the first game against SC, I was playing safety--as they called it in those days--and I went up to make a tackle, and broke my shoulder or separated my shoulder in about twelve different places. So that threw me out for the season.

Then it started to heal, and by that time, basketball was starting, so I went out for the basketball team. To make a long story short, I started out like I did on the varsity: I started out at about fifth forward. We had a coach by the name of Art Gallon. I had a few good games, and was moved up to the first string.

Lage: Was this the freshman team?

Dalton: Freshman team, yes, correct. From that time on, I decided I would try and stay with basketball.

So in my sophomore year, basically I played JV's, dressed up once in a while for the home games on the varsity, and always got in in the last thirty seconds and tripped over a line or something. I was always the--.

Lage: So it didn't come easy. You weren't a star.

Dalton: No. I thought I was. One of Pete's great lines, and we can get downstream on this, was, "If I could have bought Dalton for what he was worth, and sold him for what he thought he was worth, I would have been a millionaire." [laughter] In any event, my sophomore year was so-so. But that summer, I really worked out extensively. One of the fellows that was playing on the varsity as a forward, who I was very impressed with at that time, was Larry Friend. I watched Larry very closely, and I worked out real hard.

Came the junior year, I felt that I was in a real position to play on the club. Well, as the club emerged, I was fifth forward again. One day I asked Pete, "Coach, can I have a conversation with you?" He said, "Sure." So after practice--[telephone interruption]--I went to see the coach, and it probably was the turning point of our relationship. First of all, Pete was revered by most people on the team for many reasons. So realizing his position, I still felt that we needed to have a conversation.

I said to him, "Coach, I'd like to know where I fit on this team." He kind of hesitated, and he said, "Well, Bobby, what we need is a good small forward so that if anybody's ever pressing us, we can have a small forward to bring up the ball." I said to him, "Pete, I'm not going to hang around to bring up the ball every tenth game. You owe me the responsibility to tell me how I can improve myself and what I have to do to play."

Well, the old hair came up on the back of the neck, I could see that look coming. He got very serious, and then he just hesitated and he said, "Well, you don't screen well. You've got to improve this, you've got to improve that, you've got to improve that," and it was like a litany of things.

I did go out, and worked hard. Then we played USF, and I had the fortune of having a great game. We lost badly in that game, but Pete put me in, and I scored around twenty points or so. From that time on, I was the starting forward on the team.

Lage: Isn't that something? So that's--?

Dalton: Right. I told that story to the coach over the years, and it's very vivid in his memory. I tell everybody it was maybe the first and the last conversation we had of that kind. "You may be the greatest coach in the world, but this is my problem. This is the issue." From that came a mutual respect, and I received everything I asked for. "Here's the deal."

Lage: So the fact that he could come with a list of things you needed to improve--

Dalton: That's correct, that's right.

Lage: And that you could go to him and ask for it.

Dalton: And it also did something else: Pete was and is a very conservative person. Pete would go ten miles before he'd make a change, if he had a perception about something or somebody. It would only be until such time as he decided that it was not going to work would he make a change. So fortunately for me, it seemed to work. That conversation made him and me recognize that it's a two-way street. Basically, while everybody revered him, he was also a human being, and from that standpoint, he needed constructive dialogue with his players, which he got from many of them.

Lage: You mentioned his being revered. Was he held in awe, sort of?

Dalton: By the players, unequivocally.

Lage: But there seemed to be a nice exchange also. So how did that work, or was that--

Dalton: It was a nice exchange, but there was no question who was the coach and who were the players. Bob Knight made a great comment about Pete. It was at a banquet, and he said to Jerry West, "Jerry, the reason that you and many others didn't win against Newell teams is the man sitting at this table has created and forgotten more at both ends of the court than anybody in the history of the game."

That's absolutely correct. He was far superior in knowledge and strategy than any player that ever played for him. From that standpoint, you're talking about a group of people, all who have graduated, seventeen out of the seventeen. Darrall just went back to school and got his degree, and he did it for Pete.

Lage: Just recently?

Dalton: Just recently. So if you look at the group, you have doctors, lawyers, professional athletes, educators, tremendously successful business people--it's a powerful group.

Lage: Is it the experience of being on the team that made this a powerful group?

Dalton: I think it would have been a powerful group. It would have been a powerful group, but it would never have achieved the success it did without two essential ingredients, which are, in my opinion, missing today: that was that you cannot achieve greatness no matter how good you are and how intellectual you are, without dialogue and interchange among the players, and the leadership of the coach which, in my mind, was unparalleled.

That came about by the fact that the man who led us could not be challenged relative to his knowledge of the game. Every practice you'd come to was saturated with preparation--people wanted to come to practice. They were waiting to see what was going to happen. How were we going to play this defense? It was amazing, everything was just meticulously laid out.

In turn Pete had the great fortune of having people that could execute. They didn't have to be told twice about what the issue was.

Lage: The team members were able to take this in.

Dalton: The team members were, that's right. Take it in, and follow it almost to an unparalleled discipline. No variance; everybody realized what the goal was, and it wasn't like one guy going off and saying, "Well, you know, I think I ought to go do this." There was no question over the issues. The strategy was winning the war, and he was the general.

Lage: When I hear the system described, I wonder if the next generation, of the sixties and seventies, could have taken that same discipline. Was it anything you chafed under?

Dalton: Well, it's a rather strange thing. The question would come, could Pete have taken a Jerry West or an Oscar Robertson or a comparable person, and could he have done the same thing with superstars? The answer to that is unequivocally yes. He may have changed the utilization of the people, but Jerry West to this day said that, "Whatever Newell said on the Olympic basketball team, went." And there was no question. And these were superstars. I mean, they were the greatest basketball players of all time listening with intensity. Jerry said, "Everything got very quiet when the coach walked on to the floor." It was a new experience for that group, who may or may not have had a coach of such substance.

So the answer to that question is, I think if Pete was a senator or if he was a doctor or he was anything, he would have been able to achieve that leadership role. He's a leader.

Lage: A very quiet leader.

Dalton: Very quiet leader. But behind that quietness is what I call just General. We aren't into the conversation with the small talk three minutes, and he goes into, "Did you see this? Well, here's the deal on this," boom, boom, boom. And it's just like it was thirty-five years ago. He's right on the money. Before I can say what I think, he's said what I had thought about--not that I know that much about the game. But he's just a marvelous intellect.

You can see him now, how he relates to people and so forth. At the dinner table last night, I was challenging a remark he made, not in a critical way, but I said, "Well, in my opinion--" and he went into the dialogue and started, boom, boom, boom. It was amazing. Everybody at the table kind of looked at me, and I looked at them, and we all kind of said, "Well, here we are again.".

Lage: How did he instill this idea that you not only could win, but you would win? I am thinking of your remark to, was it Oscar Robertson--"I'm Dalton, who are you"?

Dalton: Yes.

Lage: That's a famous one. Did you have a sense that--

Dalton: We never thought we would lose.

Lage: How did you get that confidence?

Dalton: Because we were so well drilled and so well prepared. Again, Rene Herrerias, who was Pete's assistant and then became coach, was the scout. There were times in games, like we played Saint Mary's early in the season, where we'd tell their players where to go. "No, you're not supposed to go on this pass," and guys would look at you in the funniest way. Because we knew exactly what was going to happen and when it was going to happen.

Lage: Did you watch films?

Dalton: Yes, we watched them. We would pick up things like, "Look, he takes one dribble to the right and goes up for the jump shot." We got like the coach. It was just unbelievable. But there was a guy by the name of Jerry Pym who's now the coach of Santa Barbara, I believe, who had been a very respected junior college player. He played for USC--started for USC. We watched the films, and the incredible part about it is when Denny Fitzpatrick played against him when Denny was at Orange Coast, Pym scored forty points off of him.

We started watching the film, and he would take one dribble to the right and go up for the jump shot. He never drove the bucket.

First time down the court in the game, Al Buch was on him. Al blocked the first jump shot by playing him to the right side. He was ineffective for the rest of the game. I mean, just something as minute as that was picked up on films.

When we were juniors, we were playing in the regionals, too, and we played Seattle. I can't remember different members of the Seattle team--but I can remember Pete doing a scouting report on Elgin Baylor. He went on for an hour and a half, and people were falling asleep. But he would have gone on--

Lage: This is Rene, now?

Dalton: No, this is Pete, from Rene's notes. He said, "Okay, well, he'll drive the bucket, he'll pull up and shoot the jump shot, he goes left or he goes right, he'll shoot the long one, he does this, he does that." Finally, George Sterling, who was guarding him said, "Pete, how do I guard him?" Pete turns around to him and says, "Give him the long one." [laughter]

But it was almost a fetish with Pete. He was totally absorbed in dissecting Elgin Baylor, and he did, but unfortunately, Elgin Baylor could do all those things--

Lage: Right, so how do you guard him?

Dalton: So how do you guard him. He was an incredible athlete, of course. But I think we guarded him as a team, armed with Pete's preparation.

Lage: And attention to such a range of detail.

Dalton: That's right. Preparation, whether it's business or whatever, is nine-tenths of the game.

Lage: Is that something you've taken into your business?

Dalton: Yes. You still get surprises. The world of business and anything else is a world of surprises. And unfortunately too, as we have gone to the wind, we don't have the same quality of people that we surrounded ourselves with in this group. I often said had we formed a company with the talent that we've got in this group, by now we'd be going out beneath the Golden Gate with our own Baja marimba band. That's how much talent is here.

And it's not in a braggadocios manner, but collectively, there is some unique quality that everybody feeds off of here.

Lage: I'm trying to get at whether it's just the kind of guys that came to Cal during those years, or the kind of crucible of going through this experience together.

Dalton: The question is, as I think I heard when I was walking through, "Had you not won the NCAA, would you still be getting together?" I think even if we hadn't won but we had got close, we still would be the same group that's here.

Having said that, maybe questioning my own conclusion, is that the 1958 team that was very successful and almost went all the way the year before, reaching the regional finals and just--

Lage: And lost at Seattle.

Dalton: And lost; we don't get together. Now, I don't know if we don't get together because this group won it and it's a reason to do it--. I think certainly it's a reason to get together, but the primary reason is the people.

Lage: Now, tell me why you did introduce yourself to Oscar Robertson. [laughs]

Dalton: Oh, I don't know. It's kind of hazy now why all that went on, but I think it was we needed all of the psychological and physical advantage we could get. I think that it just was a ploy--

Lage: It was a deliberate thing?

Dalton: Oh, yes, just a ploy.

Lage: Well, apparently, it must have shook him up if he asked Pete the next year--

Dalton: Yes. [laughs] One of the things that always--as players, we could always count on each other. Darrall Imhoff obviously was a superior player, but he had his bad nights too, just like I did. Someone would step into the void. Quite frankly, Dick Doughty would step into the void, and without Dick Doughty in that final game, we would probably not have won it. Always somebody stepped up. If Dick was bad, then Darrall was great, and it seemed that always somebody would come in and make a major contribution.

Lage: And if you didn't have a good game, how did Pete deal with it? Were you kind of left to deal with it yourself?

Dalton: He took losses bad. It was as hard on us as it was on him. But in the final year I played, we always had a sense that it didn't matter if we lost one game, we learned from it, and we were going to win.

Lage: So you really did have the sense of--

Dalton: Oh, yes, absolutely. There was no question when we got on that plane to go to Louisville that we were going to win.

Lage: No one else thought so.

Dalton: I know. It didn't matter, because we just knew we were going to win. As a matter of fact, when we were not playing at a real great pace in that Cincinnati game, everybody came over and said, "Let's get off our duffs and get going here." And as soon as that was said, the whole thing went.

Lage: It's interesting that Pete talks about one of the reasons he got out of coaching was because it became harder and harder for him to kind of push away his own doubts and give you that unadulterated message that you were going to win. Has he ever expressed that to you guys?

Dalton: No. You mean he--

Lage: That he himself would--he felt the primary goal was to be sure you thought you were going to win, but he himself would have all these doubts, "This could happen, that could happen," and this was one of the things that was kind of eating him up.

Dalton: Well, that's kind of like a Nobel prize winner who is concerned about, "Where do I go from here?" That self-doubt, all of us have that I'm sure, at some point in time, we have met with a crisis, which the road hasn't been real clear. I just think it's a characteristic of people who are great in their profession, their field. I think the pressure was great on him, self-induced a lot of it. He was a physical wreck by the end of the season, just totally exhausted.

I don't know how Florence lived with him. It must have been a real tough one. When we lost that game to [Elgin] Baylor, to Seattle, when we were up thirteen points, that was devastating. It was a killer for all the team, but I can remember, he was just devastated. But it's like trying to seek perfection.

Lage: Well, he is a perfectionist, there's no getting around that.

Dalton: Oh, yes. I think in the loss and win column, if that is the result of what greatness is, then you're headed down a losing path. In other words, I think Pete is respected not for his loss and win record, but just his knowledge of the game, and those who have crossed his path in the coaching field, and he has helped so many, there's where the greatness is.

Lage: I know. That is coming out in my interviews with him.

Dalton: It's the teaching aspect, and the ability to dissect the problem and come up with the most logical answer. In this world we live in, if you win, or you're a millionaire or something, that's supposed to represent some degree of proven success and ability and so forth, but by the grace of God, sometimes if you're in the right spot at the right time, it really does help.

So I think in Pete's situation, he just got to a level where he saw that, "If I have to deal with this pressure. . ." Like it is today on Coach Knight--I mean, Coach Knight's a great coach, but still to this day, he's criticized in the press, maybe of his own doing a little bit. But it is a tremendous crucible, as you say. You're in the fishbowl. If you win, everything's cool; if you lose, you're going to take it.

Lage: I think it's worse now than it was then.

Dalton: Much so, yes. I think there has been quite a metamorphosis in the objective of sports.

Lage: For sure. Do you keep a relationship with Cal over the years?

Dalton: Yes, probably not as strong as I had in the earlier years. I still am a great supporter and backer of the game, but there's a lot of things that intercede in your life that--I have a seventeen-year-old son, Wesley, who is in sports who will be here tonight.

Lage: Oh, great. What sport?

Dalton: He plays football, baseball, and golf.

Lage: Pretty well rounded.

Dalton: Yes. He has heard all these stories. It's an interesting thing: he hears me talk about Pete, he loves Ned--this speaks for itself. We have a dinner for Jim Langley[?], we get together a couple of times a year, and all of us come down, or a group of us come down. The last time we were down here, I brought my son, because we played golf together at Cypress Point. Afterwards we had dinner with Jim. There were about six of us. It was an intriguing discussion about coaches that preceded Pete, coaches that came after him. Ned asked Wesley a number of questions, "Wesley, how do you feel about Lou Campanelli?" Wesley said, "Well, I think I agree with my dad. His rapport with his players isn't very good." Lou's a nice guy, but his dialogue with his players wasn't very good.

And we sat there for three hours, talking, and my son didn't leave the table. He finally had to leave the table to go to the bathroom. So on the

way home, he said, "You know, Dad, I couldn't leave the table, because I thought I was going to miss something!" [laughter] He said, "That intellect that Mr. Averbuck brings to the table." It's not, "Here's what I think; what do you think?" but he leads you to the conclusion, which kind of is the whole thing that transcended our team. It's like, be a real good listener, and you'll find the answer.

So I was impressed, and he's coming down this weekend; he can't wait to get here to see Ned. He just loves Ned. So those kind of impressions that are left with the younger generation, that's quite incredible.

Lage: It's nice to see that passed on, because they don't get it too many places.

Dalton: My son has come through a system in our area where there's great emphasis on little league sports to the point of absurdity, even in high school. When I played, you played everything. Football came along, you played; basketball came along, you played that. Now, the coaches want you to do this, and they want you to lift weights, and they want--and I'm not saying it's wrong, but it puts tremendous pressure on kids in a world that has changed so dramatically since we were kids. It's changed in a lot of ways. There's a lot more exposure for them.

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Lage: Even academically, there is a lot more pressure.

Dalton: Yes, and I think it's perhaps even more, because the--

Lage: You can remember when we went to Cal, it wasn't hard to get in.

Dalton: No. I wouldn't get in today; there's no question in my mind. I would not get in. But it puts a lot of pressure. We come from a fairly affluent area, Monte Vista High School, and all the kids, most of the kids go on to college. To Harvard. We had twelve that went to Stanford out of one high school, which is quite high. Basically, it puts a tremendous pressure on, so you've got to instill in them that, in the scheme of things, these relationships are far more precious than making a lot of money or being the only guy who is revered.

Lage: Or being the number one in your class.

Dalton: That's right. Not that--it's fine to compete, but you compete on an even playing field. A lot of that is not being done today in sports or academics.

Lage: Anything else you want to add, or any specific incidents you remember that you think illustrate Pete's influence on the team--it's a little hard to call them up on demand, I know.

Dalton: Oh, there are so many wonderful memories. I think the coach would deal with a Dalton a lot different than he would deal with a Ned or how he would deal with a Dick.

Lage: Now, why is that?

Dalton: Because he had the uncanny ability to know that every one of us was different, and some could take criticisms, others could not. For example, just one more incident: and we've all said this, as team, on the team. Pete had an incredible soft spot--not a soft spot--well, he did have a soft spot for Dick Doughty. Dick could get away with things that, if we challenged the coach on that, we would have been down on the bench, and maybe off the team.

But one incident I can remember--Pete, all he did before a game was drink coffee and smoke cigarettes. So we had a training table, and he'd be sitting there having coffee and cigarettes. They put a steak in front of him, and Dick Doughty comes into the room and sits down next to him and says, "Why aren't you eating that?"

Lage: Dick says this to Pete?

Dalton: Yes, to Pete. And gee, you could have heard a pin drop in there. Oh, boy, here it comes. Pete says, "Well, why should I?" Dick says, "Because it's good for you. You're not going to live long if you don't start--" and really just kind of pouring into him. And I'm telling you, everybody started squirming in their seats.

Now, Pete listened, and he said, "Well, I'll take it under consideration." A Denny Fitzpatrick or a Bob Dalton or a Darrall Imhoff saying that to Pete, we would have been told where to kiss off, "This is none of your business." But he had that way to deal with the individual based upon his assessment of that person's emotional construction, if you will. Incredible.

Lage: It's a very natural thing. It's not something he thinks about, it seems.

Dalton: Yes. No, it isn't. And everybody all the way down the team, all seventeen of them, he deals with them on a different plane.

Lage: And then this continuing relationship is just quite amazing.

Dalton: Yes. It is quite amazing. But everybody can count on each other. Nothing for all of us has been absolutely smooth. Some people have had economic problems, personal problems, marriage problems. But any time anyone calls on anybody, whether it's, "I need to borrow something," it's not even a question. It's not like you have to sign a note and say, "Well, will you pay me back?" We know what's going to be the answer.

That's another thing that Pete instilled in us: it doesn't hurt to ask. If you don't understand, raise your hand. Let's get that on the table. I think that has emerged here, because it's an incredible confident humility.

Lage: That's a nice term for it.

Dalton: If you ask any of us about our personal achievements and so forth, you'll hear, "I don't want to talk about that." But if someone asks you about another person's achievements, you'll sit here and talk to him about a half-hour. That's like Stan [Morrison] getting the award for the coach of the year, and we congratulate him, but in the same breath, we say, "Well, gee, you did such a great game in the Santa Barbara game," and he'll start to laugh. It's kind of like, "We love you, and congratulations, but by the way--."

Lage: [laughs] Let me just ask you one more thing, because I know you've got other things to do: What about Florence? Did you get to know her well?

Dalton: Sure. Yes.

Lage: What role did she play in all of this--aside from living with Pete during basketball season?

Dalton: Yes. Well, she was 150 percent behind every player on the team. She was our biggest supporter. And she also, being his wife, she could say things about him that--[laughs] you know, this or that, and kind of giving the kids little things to feed off of, "He's not this perfect," things of that nature. She was just an absolute marvel, and just a tremendous--. In today's world, I don't know if that type of marriage can survive. They would have to be two incredible people.

Lage: You mean because of the demands of the job?

Dalton: Oh, yes. I don't think a coach in the business today, be he in the NBA or the CBA or in college coaching, doesn't recognize that you run the risk, both from a family standpoint and a personal standpoint, of being a casualty in those relationships. There's so much pressure, the traveling, the winning, the media--

Lage: Of course, that's worse now.

Dalton: Very much so, yes. And I think Pete would defuse some of the sports writers, the ones who were critical. Bob Brachman[?], who was a reporter at the San Francisco Examiner, took everybody apart. Yet when he traveled with us, he never got into it with Pete. He turned around, too. He became a disciple, and that's what Pete did. He could do that with the press. So even the press in those days, it might have been tougher today, but I don't think so.

Lage: He's not in a position of being a coach now, but he still gets mentioned an lot in columns, sort of like, "Here's the word on basketball."

Dalton: That's right. That's correct. I mean, you can't argue with the results. But I think the greatest compliment is--well, one of them is this group.

Lage: Pete's team.

Dalton: Yes, that's right. It's absolutely unbelievable.

Lage: That's great, and I think that's a good way to end up.

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INTERVIEW WITH NED AVERBUCK

Interview conducted in 1994
by Ann Lage

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Interview History--Ned Averbuck

In the following interview with team member Ned Averbuck, Pete Newell is recalled in his many roles as Cal coach--as recruiter, father figure, academic taskmaster, disciplinarian, team builder, and teacher. Described by his coach as one of the Cal team's "twelfth men"--not a star player but an important contributor to the team--Ned is an able articulator of the experience of being a member of a Pete Newell team. He came to Cal from high school in east Los Angeles in January 1957 and was on the Cal freshman team in 1957-1958 and the two varsity teams that played in the NCAA championship games in 1959 and 1960. Ned's last year in the basketball program at Cal, 1960-1961, was Rene Herrerias's first year as coach.

This informal interview with Ned Averbuck was conducted on February 15, 1994, as part of the background research for Pete Newell's oral history. We met in a coffee shop near Laney College in Oakland, where Ned was an instructor in the Speech Department. Since this was intended only as a background interview, it was relatively unstructured and tape recorded with little attention to providing a proper sound environment. Ned's portrayal of his experiences was so vivid, however, that we decided to transcribe most of the session and include it as an appendix to Pete Newell's oral history. Ned reviewed the transcript, expressed dismay at the informality of his language, but agreed to let it stand without change once he understood that the circumstances of our recording session would be explained.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/editor

September 1997

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name NATHAN E. AVERBUCK

Date of birth 5-20-39 Birthplace NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Father's full name ABRAM ALVIN AVERBUCK (BUCK)

Occupation LABOR ORGINIZER / TEACHER Birthplace SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

Mother's full name EVELYN GREENBERG AVERBUCK

Occupation SECRETARIAL (GADFLY) Birthplace MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Your spouse MAYINE JOAN KATZ AVERBUCK

Occupation WRITER / ARTIST / FARMER Birthplace BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Your children (6) MICHELE AVERBUCK, ROBIN MARCUS, CHICO AVERBUCK, AARON AVERBUCK, ALEX AVERBUCK, CANAAN AVERBUCK GRANDCHILDREN (4) ARIEL MARCUS, MAXWELL MARCUS, SAM AVERBUCK, KAZJA AVERBUCK

Where did you grow up? EAST LOS ANGELES (BOYLE HEIGHTS)

Present community SEBASTOPOL CALIFORNIA

Education B.A. UNIV OF CALIFORNIA (SOCIAL WELFARE)
M.A SONOMA STATE (EDUCATION / READING) LIFE TIME TEACHING CREDENTIAL

Occupation(s) ① TEACHER LIFE LONG HIGH SCHOOL 3 YEARS
② CONSULTANT TEAM BUILDING ③ POET COLLEGES 33 YEARS

Areas of expertise SPEECH / ENGLISH - PHILOSOPHY - SOCIOLOGY (CRITICAL ANALYSIS)

Other interests or activities PONDERING - READING CLUBS - WRITING
SMELLING THE FLOWERS - TEAM PROCESS

Organizations in which you are active COMMUNITY LITERACY PROGRAMS, EL MOLINO SPORT ACADEMY, ROTARY YOUTH PROGRAMS, VOLUNTEER COUNSELOR

APPENDIX B

Interview with Ned Averbuck

[Date of Interview: February 15, 1994] ##

Lage: Tell me about how you happened to come to Cal.

Averbuck: Well, I was real fortunate. I was being heavily recruited by the UCLA and USC--I went to high school in east Los Angeles and I graduated in winter semester. Three of us who came to Cal that year came in midseason, so we had a year and a half as freshmen, which we needed because we were babies. We needed it. For me it was part of a unique experience that set a tone, not only looking back on it, but I think I understood it while I was in school, mostly because of the help of roommates and classmates and teammates.

I didn't take my trip to Stanford, because I had already decided to go to Cal, but UCLA and USC really recruited me and a guy by the name of Earl Shultz, who was also all-city in Los Angeles that year. He turned out to be a much better college basketball player than I did. He and I got recruited at the same time and very heavily by UCLA, and I had always been a UCLA fan, but my high school coach had played with all SC players, and SC was exceedingly nice and went overboard in recruitment.

Shultz and I and some other recruits were invited up to Cal [in November 1956]. First of all, it was a magical weekend. It was Big Game, and it was Pappy Waldorf's last game. And second, one of our best lifelong friends and future teammate was a sophomore that year, Joe Kapp, and Joe Kapp bested John Brodie in the Big Game. I didn't know Joe then, but we knew two members of the Cal basketball team, who were basketball friends--we had either played against each other or been competitive. One was Larry Friend. He was three or four years older than us and part of a Cal program that was changing the whole direction at Cal. Matter of fact, that winter, Cal would win its first Pacific Coast Conference championship. Larry Friend that year would make All-American.

What happened that weekend--we didn't see Pete right away. We met the assistant coach, Rene Herrerias, and we stayed at the Hotel Durant, and the Hotel Durant wasn't half as lovely as it is today. We went to the Big Game, and that was one of the most enlightening experiences of my teens--coming from east L.A. and going to that type of fervor, that type of emotion. Cal upset John Brodie's so-called Rose Bowl team, in Pappy's last game.

So that kind of set the tone. That night we went to a basketball party, and we had a really wonderful time. I can remember the closeness that the team felt. Pete trusted his players to do the recruiting.

Lage: Oh really?

Averbuck: That's right. If the program was good, the players would tell you. That was the first time that happened to me. At UCLA and USC, I had been separated from players. The coaches did all the recruiting.

But I was still partial [to the southern schools]. It's much easier when you grow up in east L.A. to stay in L.A. Both those schools had fine programs for a long time.

The next morning I met Pete at the Hotel Durant. I think he talked to Shultz and myself at different times. We weren't coming as a package anywhere, but we were playing against each other in the same league, and we were very competitive with each other. Pete talked with me at the hotel for breakfast before we went back on the plane, and it was the most startling experience in my life. We talked for the first forty minutes about everything but basketball. Basketball was never mentioned.

Lage: And what did you talk about?

Averbuck: The types of questions were, What do you expect to get from a university like California? What can you give the university? He asked me about my family. He asked me how I felt about winning or losing. The questions were mind-boggling. You know, my parents had talked with me about these things. My dad, because he was a theoretician, and he had a skepticism about sports generally, and college sports in particular.

Lage: Oh, he did?

Averbuck: Oh, yes. He didn't want me to play. He thought it was a waste of time and that I should be out politically organizing. He was a western states organizer for the Communist party. By the time I finished at Cal, he was a

true believer in Pete Newell, Cal basketball, and Cal period. My younger brother and sister graduated from Cal also, because of that.

What happened was that Pete talked to me for about forty minutes, and it was grueling. When I say grueling, it wasn't like it wasn't fun. But we talked about things that you didn't expect to talk about. When I talked to other coaches, they talked about basketball, and summer jobs, and what I would get and what I wouldn't get. Even Loyola, when I went out to Loyola, the guy said, "We'll top any monetary scholarship and give you as much money as you need. You'll have a summer job; don't worry about a thing." It's great, because you feel all bloated up.

When you came away from Pete's thing, I felt humble. I felt kind of lucky to just be interviewed. And yet we left on very good terms. So I came home and I told my dad about the weekend, and my father had always told me I would be able to select the school I would go to. He listened very intently, as he often did, and he didn't say anything for a long time. And he said, "I think you should call the other schools tomorrow and tell them you aren't coming, you are going to Cal. And call Mr. Newell and tell him that's where you want to go to school."

I said, "Jeez, Dad, I don't want to do that. I think I might want to go to UCLA or SC." He said, "No, you are going to the University of California. You are going to the best school with the best teacher."

So we got into a real argument. "I thought you were going to let me choose it." He said, "You have. You really have chosen it, if you think about it. You have told me what happened at these other schools. I have met some of these other gentlemen. I haven't met Mr. Newell, but you are going to play for Mr. Newell. You are going for the best teacher at the best academic institution.

So that was it.

So that was my first experience with Pete. He did things on a different beat. He wasn't like everybody else. As a matter of fact, Pete didn't really like recruiting. He wasn't like this kind of three-piece suit, back-slapping mentality. It was like, Let's see if there is a fit here, see what's good for everybody, and if you are comfortable, then we have a chance.

You know, he asked me things like, "Do you like to see your teammates share success? What do you feel like when you win a championship? What does it feel like when you lose?"

Lage: These are hard questions, for an eighteen year old.

Averbuck: Here I am, fifty-five, and I'm still dealing with them.

Lage: When you told him about your family, did you mention your father's position in the Communist party?

Averbuck: He knew everything. Basically, what he did, Pete--if you know him and you know his intensity--it looks like he is looking away from you or through you--he knew everything about my family. As a matter of fact, he used it with me at times, and also his relationship with my family at times.

Because once my father met him--my father and Mr. Shultz and our families drove us up here at the end of January to start school in February. They met Pete at the old student union, Stephens Hall, where basketball had a corner office. My father met Pete for the first time, and he came back out and--My dad was a very wise teacher, in many ways. Looking back on it, I miss my father a lot. All he said was one thing, "Do the best you can. Listen to Mr. Newell. You've made the right decision."

Later on my father told me that he and Pete talked about basketball [laughter], which was impossible, because my dad was just getting ready to drop out of the party, on theoretical and philosophical grounds. He had been a sheet-metal journeyman, taught himself sheet-metal through some of the ex-members of the party. When he used to come to my games in east L.A., he came after work, sometimes get there at half time, and he was always there supporting, but he didn't really understand the sport.

But he made himself a true sportsman of basketball, through Pete. Later he told me, ten or fifteen years later, I asked him what he talked about with Pete that day. My father, with all the Communist bull shit, was still a very competitive person; it was an underlying part of the family. He said, we talked about where Cal basketball was headed, why he felt he had chosen the right players to come now, the right mix to be a very good team. And my dad was shocked, and he asked, "Well how good?" and Pete said, "Well, this team is going to win the national championship."

So Pete had already put the pieces together, as far as he was concerned, and that what makes him highly unique too, even to this day, that he has an instinct about getting players, not just star players, but certain players that will give emotional backing as well as physical backing to a team to make it a stronger unit. He has a sense of what makes a unit that you can't teach a coach, besides an understanding of the game.

Lage: Does he look for character?

Averbuck: All the time, I think even today, working with the big men, he measures it very quickly, whether they know it or not, maybe before they even come to his clinics and camps. I don't call it a camp, I call it a lifetime learning experience, for a lot of these guys. You know, they are multimillionaires, and yet they come and humble themselves with fundamentals. You have to remember, as coaches go, Pete didn't coach for a very long time, and yet he is still considered to be professor, a theorist, a pioneer, and a guru, for some coaches, that go far beyond his years in coaching.

And yet, Pete has never stopped coaching, really.

Lage: Well, he made the distinction between coaching and teaching in talking to me, and he prefers teaching.

Averbuck: Yes, he is a teacher. When I use the word coach...

Let me give you an example. Glenn Seaborg was in our locker room at the Cow Palace in 1960, the year we lost in the NCAA final game. We lost the last game of the season. Pete was retiring.

First, you have to understand the setting. Everybody in America said we were lucky the year before. As it turned out, we went through those same team, with the same players. We beat Oscar Robertson again in the semifinals; we had beaten Jerry West earlier in the season, so even though Cincinnati was rated number one, we were the best team in America, really, that year.

With eight or ten games to go in the season, people knew this was Pete's last year of coaching at Cal. Everywhere we went he got ten minutes standing ovation. One of the things that really hurt us in the Cow Palace--Friday night you played for the western championship, or the eastern championship, and Saturday night was the culmination. The best team always won those games; there was none of this two-days' rest business.

Anyway, Pete gets this major ovation. We get twenty points behind at halftime. We go into the locker room. We're flat, we're not doing anything. Ohio State is taking the ball to us. Ohio State has a young coach who has turned their program around, who is a disciple of Pete Newell, Fred Taylor. Bobby Knight was the seventh man on that team. He was a sophomore. They had Jerry Lucas, who played in the Olympics for Pete, John Havlicek, Fred Roberts--their whole first five went to the pros.

Anyhow, they really beat the wee-wee out of us the first half. And Pete comes in the locker room and tells us, "Jeez, we're not getting any rebounds, Darrall." And Darrall goes, "I don't think there are any, Pete." And Pete looks at him--they are shooting 87 per cent, or some amazing figure; we are the best defensive team in the country. We got it close, to eight points in the second half, but the last few minutes we missed some free throws and some shots and they beat us a wide margin. Probably on any other night I think we could have beaten them.

It's always a workshop for Pete, and we are sitting on these benches. And you can smell the cows in the cow palace, you really could. There had been a rodeo there two weeks before, and they clean it up as much as they can, but the lockers are--It's just the biggest edifice in the area.

Glenn Seaborg was our guest for that game. He sat at training table with us. He was the chancellor at Cal. We had two rows of six guys in a row, and Pete made some points at the blackboard, where we were going to apply pressure, and how it would work, and what we would do to force the ball out, and how we were going to take control of the game. He asked us some questions about the players on the other team. He did interactive teaching, so you were responsible for knowing the scouting report, knowing each player on the other team, knowing the tendencies of the team.

So you can see that it was a classroom still, and when Pete started with what we were going to do, I could see Seaborg in the back out of the corner of my eye, flannel suit, he's nodding. He understood, he could see the same thing in physics, which rules would be applied, and you felt there was a camaraderie between them that went way beyond basketball coach and chancellor at the university.

Another guy on the team verified it for me. I said, "Am I making this up?" He said, "No, Seaborg felt really like he knew what was happening."

And then when we failed at it, it was basically our failure, it wasn't the plan. It wasn't Pete.

Lage: How did Pete deal with the locker time at half time?

Averbuck: Very well, we usually made adjustments. Rene would come in and write stuff on the backboard. Pete would then make comments. He could play back every moment in the game. He was a basketball genius.

Lage: You have said he had a photographic memory.

Averbuck: He could play a whole game back for you, where everyone is on the floor, without forgetting a thing. With that advantage, you make adjustments. And we did, we played much better and we got more zest, but we were flat.

Lage: What does it mean when a team is flat? Why were you flat?

Averbuck: Well, it's mental fatigue, it is a season of fighting. The levels of competing are very difficult to get to some times. If you look at the game the night before, Ohio State basically rested their starters the night before, won by 35 points, they were peaking at the right time. They tied for the Big 10 championship with two other teams, whom we had slaughtered.

So, just to give you an example, Pete after the game sat with each of us in a cubicle, because you are destitute, and talked to each of us and told us how he felt privileged to be part of our lives, what it meant to him. What he did at that time, when we met as a team, he took responsibility for the loss. He said, "I showed you the wrong picture of this team in preparation. I showed you a game in which they lost and didn't look very good, instead of one in which they won and how powerful they were." He took responsibility, but I think he was wrong. I think it was us. We just didn't execute like we usually did.

Lage: And you can't forget the other team.

Averbuck: Oh, they were great, individually, and as a team. They had three players who were all-time, all-pro players, whereas we had one player who would go on to play in the pros for fourteen years.

Lage: Tell me about some of the other people connected with the program. How about Rene?

Averbuck: Rene was instrumental. People don't realize this. Rene had big shoes to fill as head coach. He is a brilliant basketball mind, but his ability to communicate the game is probably less than Pete's. How do you take over the next year for someone who is basically a god on campus. And Rene, in establishing being his own man, didn't use Pete the way he could have, I don't feel. And he coached at a difficult time.

Rene was instrumental in this way--Pete had total confidence in Rene. That's very important. If Pete took you on, he didn't dominate you. If Rene took guards on one side of the court, they were Rene's guards. Pete didn't hop in every two minutes.

Rene made scouting reports. We always had an advantage on the other team because we had a psychological profile of them as well as a physical game plan. Rene would tell you something like, "Play this guy this way early, and if we force him to miss a couple of shots, he will give up." Tendencies of a player, where to play him.

So they started preparing us on Wednesday, and you always had a distinct advantage without knowing it. I always felt in every game at Cal that we were going to win. There was never any doubt about it.

Lage: What position did you play?

Averbuck: I was a small forward; I was a big forward, if I got a chance to play there; and I was a substitute center. So I got to play all positions. Pete would try to find a way to get his substitutes in.

##

Lage: Rene was the freshman coach and the assistant coach?

Averbuck: Yes, he would run freshman practice, unless he was on the road. Then Bob Albo or Rupe Ricksen, who were the student coaches, would run freshman practice. Rupe was in law school over at Hastings, and Bob was in medical school. Both of them were great players in the early fifties at Cal. Their team won the Pacific Coast Conference in 1952, I believe. A fellow by the name of Bob McKeen would come out and work with us. Pete used the alumni around the program who had great skill.

So the freshman year was a great experience, and an important growing period for Pete. He knew everything about you and kept a close eye on you, both as a player and a student.

Rene would coach from 3:00 to 4:15, freshman practice, and 4:15 started varsity, right on the dot.

Lage: Never late?

Averbuck: Never, ever, ever. As a matter of fact, if you were a player, you always beat Pete to wherever we were going, because Pete was never late and no player was ever to be even a second late.

Lage: What happened if you were late?

Averbuck: Depending on the player, and what they could tolerate, and its importance to the team at the time, it could be a very difficult situation for you or it

could be one in which it was just a learning experience for everybody. That also was the case with grades. I was supposed to make a trip when I was a sophomore, and the cinch notices came out; I got three cinch notices my sophomore year. One of the players came and said, "Pete wants to see you." We called him Pete; we didn't call him Mr. Newell. I went into the coaches' locker room downstairs in the gym. Pete is still in his coaching attire, which was usually grey slacks and a blue shirt and Converse shoes, and he says, "Sit down. How are things going?"

"Great, Pete, great, everything's wonderful, school's great. And basketball, I'm getting better, aren't I?"

"Yes, you're improving slowly, slowly. I'm not really worried about those things. I'm more concerned about the classroom." And I could tell he was serious, his jaw is getting tight. "How are you doing there?"

"Oh, I got a few cinch notices, but it doesn't mean anything; I'm a slow starter. I'm going to do better."

Pete says, "Well, I think your sloppiness in the classroom and your inattentiveness is also spilling over onto the court. The most important thing is I'm afraid your dad and mom are going to think I am a liar. I'm not a liar, and I don't think you want to be." Those were the words he used. We're just sitting on a bench. I'm starting to sweat. He said, "You know there is something about our word in life, and one of the words we had when you came to Cal was that you were going to be the best student you could possibly be, and I promise that to all the parents on the team, and somehow or ever both of us are breaking our words to your parents. I don't like this idea of turning it into another gear after you fall behind; that's not the way to play things in life, so I don't think you are going to be going up to Washington with us."

Lage: You must have been devastated.

Averbuck: I can't even tell you where my heart was. I started to say, "Well Pete, I am going to do fine." He said, "It's a question of every day, execution, being true to yourself, being true to your word, taking care of those things that need taking care of every day. You are here for an education first." He's not raising his voice, not threatening you.

I can remember having to listen to those games on the radio, and having to tell my father I was not going to make the trip. First you feel sorry for yourself and are mad at Pete, then you start to think maybe you better try to do what he expects.

Lage: Did it change your behavior?

Averbuck: I was the type of person you had to kick in the ass every six months. I was a bit of an anarchist; I had a very difficult time following rules, although I never broke team rules. Pete knew. The joke was, Pete had spies everywhere. He knew everybody. He never threw it up in your face unless it became a problem, but he knew everything about us; we were his family. When he shook hands with you to come to Cal, there was a contract, and it worked both ways. It wasn't just the idea that he was going to use you up. And that's why most of us have stayed with Pete all these years. I might not talk to Pete once every six months, but there is still a closeness and understanding.

He treated us with respect. He never humiliated players. He would spend extra time with the sophomores and juniors after practice; it became a personal workshop. That's how he was able to bring players along. Most coaches leave that to their assistant coaches and leave practices when their first string players leave.

Lage: Tell me the story you told me on the phone about team building, making you feel like a team.

Averbuck: We had three different managers while I was there, and I can't recall who was manager when this happened. I think it was in Moscow, Idaho. It was snowing when we arrived at the hotel. I remember the bags coming out of the bus. The manager, he was scurrying around, he's got forty-two bags, and all the players are just walking into the hotel, with nothing. Plus the manager is responsible for room assignments and everything. I can remember how mad Pete was. We stood there freezing, while Pete told us, very quietly, that this will never happen again. You guys get yourselves outside, and you pick up the bags because your teammate is doing all the work. That was his exact word. It was so direct. A manager helps in many ways, but we all help us to get where we are going.

##

Averbuck: Pete had a sense of connection, with all that's gone on before him. We knew about the players that came before us, and before he coached at Cal. Nibs Price, his predecessor--whenever he mentioned Nibs Price to us, it was always with the greatest of respect and accolades. If Nibs Price came to practice or a game, Pete always bade him a special hello. I will tell you that those two people are so far apart, both in basketball knowledge, philosophy, and life style, as to make somebody's head swim.

Other coaches might belittle their predecessors to bind the players to him. Not Pete. I didn't know that Nibs Price had problems, as I learned later. I just knew he had laid the foundation for us, and we would know we were part of a tradition. He would talk about the guys from his first team, which went one and eleven, and tell us how they had set the table for them. He was building a sense of how we were part of a bigger pattern.

I want to tell you something about a couple of Pete's systems and show you why he was a teacher. Kapp and I made a professional pledge. We took the fifteen or sixteen things we thought Pete had taught us. That's all we did for one weekend.

Lage: Now when was this?

Averbuck: 1987, seven years ago. We were going out to lecture to large business audiences and public school audiences. We said, What type of things did you learn at Cal, from Pete? Joe had just been fired as Cal coach.

We put something together for people in the work world, directly related to what we learned from Pete. It has the anomalies of Pete in it; it has the Jesuitness of Pete in it; and it has the conservatism of sport in it, I believe. We find that when people sign this oath mentally they made themselves better right away. And I think he did this to us without us knowing it.

Lage: Now were you thinking primarily of Pete when you and Joe Kapp developed this professional pledge?

Averbuck: Oh, absolutely. Joe played for many many coaches and went through some of the great names in coaching, a couple of them in the Hall of Fame, and I'll say to him, Who was the best teacher you ever had? "Pete Newell, no one even close." And he is always on the outs with Pete--Why didn't I play more? I could have been an all-American in basketball. To this day, there is still friction there, as well as respect for each other.

Lage: Do you think Joe Kapp had that kind of ability in basketball?

Averbuck: Oh yes.

Lage: Why didn't Pete play him more, then?

Averbuck: Pete didn't want a star in two sports, and he realized that Joe could help the team in other ways. Somewhere, when he and Joe sat down before his senior season--Joe didn't play in his senior year; he was playing in the

Hula Bowl and the Pro Bowl and he realized that football was going to be his life, not basketball.

Lage: Was Earl Robinson on your team also?

Averbuck: Earl was the captain of baseball and basketball. He was the player of the year in America in baseball. He also was the first black baseball player to sign a legitimate bonus contract in the United States.

He was also captain of the basketball team two years in a row. That was the team, in '58, that should have won the NCAA championship, but got beat by Seattle.

Lage: And he played both baseball and basketball.

Averbuck: We were the last all-White team to win the NCAA championships, but we had two black players who were ineligible because of grades. Widdow McCullough would have been a player for us, and Bob Washington. Earl started for Pete in '56, as a sophomore, and '57 and '58.

Lage: And then went on to professional baseball?

Averbuck: Yes. We had four or five baseball players who played basketball, and the reason they came out was that Pete was the assistant coach to Cal's NCAA championship team. George Sterling, Earl, Bernie Simpson, and one other.

Earl is funny. Earl could tell you some amazing stories about Pete. Earl's team in '58--their biggest guy was 6'7". That was the team that should have won the NCAA. They were good, they were smart. If they could have gotten by Elgin Baylor and Seattle, they would have won the NCAA. They were a precision team, played the game like clockwork.

Lage: Did anyone on your team go on to coach?

Averbuck: All of us have coached at one time or another. We have a guy that was the most intellectual guy on our team, Dick Doughty, who doesn't even come to the reunions, who sees our whole experience differently. He coached in Indonesia for two years; he started basketball in Indonesia. American basketball became a bore to him because everybody knows how to play. He would only go to places where people had never seen a ball before.

Lage: Did he not like his experience at Cal as well?

Averbuck: He looks at it differently. He looked at it very intellectually. And I would say if anyone would be critical of his Cal experience, it would be Doughty, but he would also tell you some amazing things about Pete. They were the closest people I have ever met to being on a par with each other. Doughty could answer Pete without putting himself in jeopardy. Pete always got even with him. Doughty always felt he was better than Imhoff. So that was great; there was competition on the team.

By the way, he was instrumental in our winning the NCAA. When Imhoff was tired, someone came in who did something different than Imhoff, and who was just as good, and great in his own way, an unorthodox player. Within that pattern, he was perfect. He carried off every drill, everything just like this. He thought he was smarter, and therefore should be starting because he could win for us when it was necessary, which he did. Many times during the season he finished for us, not Imhoff.

One time, I think in Washington, we were having dinner after practice. Doughty hated peas, he hated vegetables. Newell gets the waitress. She was at least sixty-five years old, a hard-working woman. He tells her Doughty has vitamin deficiency and please get him to eat his vegetables. Doughty was so mad, and he knew Pete put her up to it, but she got him to eat them. Doughty was a gambler, a risk-taker, he's an anarchist down deep, so he doesn't trust anyone in authority.

Lage: It's interesting that these anarchists--as you have described yourself, also--got on this very regulated regimen, and bought into it.

Averbuck: Yes, it was regulated to a point, but it maximized freedom to a great degree. It also gave you a great sense of accomplishment. When you left the gym every day, you knew something special had happened, no matter how tired you were, there was something in your life that made it meaningful. It went way beyond the university. It's hard to describe to people. If you talk to anyone, they felt the same way. You also have to remember, we liked each other. To this day, this exists.

##

Averbuck: Every five years we still get together. At the second five year reunion, most of us were still in coaching. We were all about twenty-nine or thirty. It turned out to be sort of a homage to Pete. He was then involved with the San Diego Rockets. Denny Fitzpatrick said, "Pete, you made us what we were. Even at the time, I bridled against it. I thought I could have been a better player just being an individual. I felt I was being harnessed. But now when I look at it, I feel that it was good for me, at least in terms

of the total result. But I really could have been an All-American, Pete, and I'm pissed at you for that."

And then finally Pete said something, way at the last. He said, "I want to tell you, I am sure of one thing. It was you guys, and it wasn't me at all. It's really you guys, it was what you brought to it, it was what you made it. Someday you will realize that. It truly wasn't me, and I was just part of it."

Lage: He's not an egotist.

Averbuck: Yes. At that time, he knew that we were in awe of him. And yet, I will tell you at this time--we are having our thirty-fifth year reunion in Carmel this year. Thinking back on it now, most of us are more in awe of Pete than when we played for him. Because most people have had so many experiences, but there is something about this experience that always comes back. To win the championship always is a great thing, but that is not all of it.

Lage: Tell me what it was like when Pete decided to retire from coaching. What do you understand about it, and how did the team handle it?

Averbuck: Well, the way he handled it, he made it not traumatic for us. He told us first before it came in the papers. Second, he made it a natural transition with Rene taking over. The other thing that we weren't ready for that led to our flatness; you know before the final game there was a five-minute standing ovation, and Pete is very superstitious, very--you know the towel in his mouth. Part of it was to cover up his language, as well as to have something to chew on. Remember he is living every second of the game. I sat next to him on the bench. I had to move down to the end of the bench.

Pete always would come out of the locker room after we had; he let us warm up alone. Part of it, I think, was for us to take control of the situation. Well, the last eight games of the season, when he came out, he got standing ovations. Even the players stopped practicing to applaud him.

That last night in the Cow Palace, the whole place went crazy, absolutely mad. You realized you were part of something so much bigger. That led to our flatness, by the way.

Lage: It took some of the emotion out?

Averbuck: Yes, the emotion was drained out of you, just drained out. You just can't take it any more.

Lage: Did Pete tell you why he was retiring?

Averbuck: Oh, that he was going to be athletic director, and it was a good time for him. He would always be involved in basketball.

Lage: Wasn't that kind of a shock for you?

Averbuck: At the time that he told us, yes, but at the same time we saw it as a kind of continuum. There was a natural flow to it. You never felt that you were away from Pete. When I played for Rene in my senior year, Pete was always there for you if you needed him.

Pete Newell Big Man Camp, Ltd.

A

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1				CAMP ALUMNI				
2								
3								
4	ALAA ABDELNABY					CHRIS GATLING		
5	TOM ABERNETHY					KENNY GATTISON		
6	RAPHAEL ADDISON					ARMON GILLIAM		
7	ISAAC AUSTIN					HORACE GRANT		
8	MILOS BABIC					STUART GRAY		
9	WILLIAM BEDFORD					A.C. GREEN		
10	BENOIT BENJAMIN					SIDNEY GREEN		
11	FRED BENJAMIN					DAVE HOPPEN		
12	WINSTON BENNETT					KEN JOHNSON		
13	DAVID BENOIT					STEVE JOHNSON		
14	WALTER BERRY					CHARLES JONES		
15	SAM BOWIE					SHAWN KEMP		
16	RANDY BREUER					TIM KEMPTON		
17	FRANK BRICKOWSKI					JEROME KERSEY		
18	MICHAEL BROWN					RANDOLPH KEYS		
19	STANLEY BRUNDY					ALBERT KING		
20	MARK BRYANT					BERNARD KING		
21	GREG BUTLER					RICH KING		
22	MICHAEL CAGE					STACEY KING		
23	ELDEN CAMPBELL					JON KONCAK		
24	ANTOINE CARR					JEROME LANE		
25	KENNY CARR					KEITH LEE		
26	JOE BARRY CARROLL					GARY LEONARD		
27	TERRY CATLEDGE					ALTON LISTER		
28	DUANE CAUSWELL					GRANT LONG		
29	PETE CHILCUTT					DANNY MANNING		
30	WAYNE COOPER					FERNANDO MARTIN		
31	PAT CUMMINGS					XAVIER McDANIEL		
32	BRAD DAUGHERTY					CHRIS McNEALY		
33	VLADE DIVAC					TERRY MILLS		
34	JAMES DONALDSON					CHRIS MORRIS		
35	KEVIN DUCKWORTH					GEORGE MULLER		
36	CHRIS DUDLEY					CHRIS MULLIN		
37	JAMES EDWARDS					TRACEY MURRAY		
38	DALE ELLIS					JERROD MUSTAF		
39	LAPHONSO ELLIS					LARRY NANCE		
40	DANNY FERRY					SWEN NATER		
41	DON FORD					KEN NORMAN		
42	GREG FOSTER					CHARLES OAKLEY		
43	RICK FOX					HAKEEM OLAJUWON		
44	DEAN GARRETT					SHAQUILLE O'NEAL		
45	HANK GATHERS					JOSE ORTIZ		
46	ADAM KEEFE					JERMAINE ONEAL		
47	ANDREW LANG					IKE NWANKWO		
48	WILL PERDUE					DOUG EDWARDS		

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
49	SAM PERKINS					RODNEY ROGERS		
50	CHUCK PERSON					BRIAN WILLIAMS		
51	ED PINCKNEY					SEAN ROOKS		
52	SCOTTIE PIPPEN					GEORGE ZIDEK		
53	OLDEN POLYNICE					ACIE EARL		
54	KURT RAMBIS					CHRIS TOWER		
55	BLAIR RASMUSSEN					YINKA DARE		
56	CLIFFORD ROBINSON					SEAN HIGGINS		
57	BRIAN ROWSOM					GHEORGHE MUREASON		
58	RALPH SAMPSON					JIM McILVAINE		
59	RONY SEIKALY					MICHAEL SMITH		
60	BRAD SELLERS					MIKE PEPLOWSKI		
61	JOHN SHASKY					STEVE SCHEFFLER		
62	PURVIS SHORT					DONTONIO WINGFIELD		
63	DOUG SMITH					CORIE BLUNT		
64	ELMORE SMITH					P.J. BROWN		
65	LARRY SMITH					ANTONIO HARVEY		
66	REGGIE SMITH					DONALD HODGE		
67	ED STOKES					RICHARD MANNING		
68	BOB THORNTON					DWAYNE SCHINTZIUS		
69	OTIS THORPE					LIONEL SIMMONS		
70	WAYMAN TISDALE					DON McLEAN		
71	KIKI VANDEWEGHE					DALE DAVIS		
72	LOY VAUGHT					ANTONIO DAVIS		
73	BILL WALTON					GEORGE ZIDEK		
74	CHRIS WASHBURN					ERIC CHENOWITH		
75	KERMIT WASHINGTON					STEVE HAMER		
76	CHRISTIAN WELP					ALAN HENDERSON		
77	MARK WEST					NATE HUFFMAN		
78	JEROME WHITEHEAD					ZYDRUNAS ILGAUSKAS		
79	JOHN WILLIAMS					JELANI MCCOY		
80	PETE WILLIAMS					JIM MCILVAINE		
81	JAMES WORTHY					LOREN MEYER		
82	HOWARD WRIGHT					CHRIS MIHM		
83	TYRONE HILL					BRADLEY MILLARD		
84	CHRIS MILLS					ERIC MOBLEY		
85	BOBBY PHILLS					ERIC MONTROSS		
86	ERVIN JOHNSON					LAMOND MURRAY		
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Centennial History Project, 1954-1960. 329 pp.
Includes interviews with George P. Adams, Anson Stiles Blake, Walter C. Blasdale, Joel H. Hildebrand, Samuel J. Holmes, Alfred L. Kroeber, Ivan M. Linforth, George D. Louderback, Agnes Fay Morgan, and William Popper. (Bancroft Library use only.)

Thomas D. Church, Landscape Architect. Two volumes, 1978, 803 pp.
Volume I: Includes interviews with Theodore Bernardi, Lucy Butler, June Meehan Campbell, Louis De Monte, Walter Doty, Donn Emmons, Floyd Gerow, Harriet Henderson, Joseph Howland, Ruth Jaffe, Burton Litton, Germano Milano, Miriam Pierce, George Rockrise, Robert Royston, Geraldine Knight Scott, Roger Sturtevant, Francis Violich, and Harold Watkin.
Volume II: Includes interviews with Maggie Baylis, Elizabeth Roberts Church, Robert Glasner, Grace Hall, Lawrence Halprin, Proctor Mellquist, Everitt Miller, Harry Sanders, Lou Schenone, Jack Stafford, Goodwin Steinberg, and Jack Wagstaff.

Interviews with Dentists. (Dental History Project, University of California, San Francisco.) 1969, 1114 pp. Includes interviews with Dickson Bell, Reuben L. Blake, Willard C. Fleming, George A. Hughes, Leland D. Jones, George F. McGee, C. E. Rutledge, William B. Ryder, Jr., Herbert J. Samuels, Joseph Sciutto, William S. Smith, Harvey Stallard, George E. Steninger, and Abraham W. Ward. (Bancroft Library use only.)

Julia Morgan Architectural History Project. Two volumes, 1976, 621 pp.
Volume I: *The Work of Walter Steilberg and Julia Morgan, and the Department of Architecture, UCB, 1904-1954*. Includes interviews with Walter T. Steilberg, Robert Ratcliff, Evelyn Paine Ratcliff, Norman L. Jensen, John E. Wagstaff, George C. Hodges, Edward B. Hussey, and Warren Charles Perry.
Volume II: *Julia Morgan, Her Office, and a House*. Includes interviews with Mary Grace Barron, Kirk O. Rowlands, Norma Willer, Quintilla Williams, Catherine Freeman Nimitz, Polly Lawrence McNaught, Hettie Belle Marcus, Bjarne Dahl, Bjarne Dahl, Jr., Morgan North, Dorothy Wormser Coblentz, and Flora d'Ille North.

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Volume I: 1901-1920, 1970, 307 pp.
Volume II: 1921-1930, 1977, 313 pp.
Volume III: 1931-1935, 1990, 343 pp.

Six Weeks in Spring, 1985: Managing Student Protest at UC Berkeley. 887 pp. Transcripts of sixteen interviews conducted during July-August 1985 documenting events on the UC Berkeley campus in April-May 1985 and administration response to student activities protesting university policy on investments in South Africa. Interviews with: Ira Michael Heyman, chancellor; Watson Laetsch, vice chancellor; Roderic Park, vice chancellor; Ronald Wright, vice chancellor; Richard Hafner, public affairs officer; John Cummins and Michael R. Smith, chancellor's staff; Patrick Hayashi and B. Thomas Travers, undergraduate affairs; Mary Jacobs, Hal Reynolds, and Michelle Woods, student affairs; Derry Bowles, William Foley, Joseph Johnson, and Ellen Stetson, campus police. (Bancroft Library use only.)

Robert Gordon Sproul Oral History Project. Two volumes, 1986, 904 pp. Includes interviews with Horace Albright, Stuart LeRoy Anderson, Katherine Bradley, Dyke Brown, Natalie Cohen, Paul A. Dodd, May Dornin, Richard E. Erickson, Walter S. Frederick, David P. Gardner, Vernon Goodin, Marion Sproul Goodin, Louis Heilbron, Clark Kerr, Adrian Kragen, Robert S. Johnson, Mary Blumer Lawrence, Donald McLaughlin, Dean McHenry, Stanley E. McCaffrey, Kendric and Marion Morrish, William Penn Mott, Jr., Herman Phleger, John B. deC. M. Saunders, Carl Sharsmith, John Sproul, Robert Gordon Sproul, Jr., Wallace Sterling, Wakefield Taylor, Robert Underhill, Garff Wilson, and Pete L. Yzaquirre.

The University of California during the Presidency of David P. Gardner, 1983-1992. (In process.) Interviews with members of the university community and state government officials.

The Women's Faculty Club of the University of California at Berkeley, 1919-1982. 1983, 312 pp. Includes interviews with Josephine Smith, Margaret Murdock, Agnes Robb, May Dornin, Josephine Miles, Gudveig Gordon-Britland, Elizabeth Scott, Marian Diamond, Mary Ann Johnson, Eleanor Van Horn, and Katherine Van Valer Williams.

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Gordon, Walter A. *Athlete, Officer in Law Enforcement and Administration, Governor of the Virgin Islands.* Two volumes, 1980, 621 pp.

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